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This issue is dedicated to memory of Anne Gwynne.

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Photo of Bela Lugosi courtesy of Bela G. Lugosi from his father's personal scrapbooks.

# We Got Mail! letters to the editor



Wow! I mean *The Raven* is a great film, but calling it "The Citizen Kane of horror thrillers," as Michael Copner recently did, is just a little too much praise, don't you think? I'm a little partial to *The Black Cat*. I feel Lugosi's tortured hero is a great change of pace role for him. What Lugosi fan doesn't chuckle with delight at his final treatment of Karloff's villain? This seems to be the only film where Lugosi gets the upper hand on Karloff.

Loved the "Bond Curse" story. By the way, Lois Maxwell did a memorable guest shot on *The Avengers* TV series during Honor Blackman's run.  
Bill Allen  
Yonkers, NY

[Editorial reply: Have we started a slight controversy simply sighting *The Raven* as the Mount Everest of horror melodramas on the screen? Of course 90% of the result may be the glory of Lugosi's evil unleashed, here without use nor need of gothic trappings and surroundings. The *Raven* seems as modern, streamlined and contemporary today as it must have been in 1935. And it puts "all the colors of the spectrum" of Beh's acting on display in a story even Poe MIGHT have admired. Only Arthur Lennox has outlined the production and completed results of this film with much detail in public print, and the film has been overlooked by many horror fans. The film is felt to be a kind of gunnicks, an opportunistic teaming of Karloff and Lugosi, and dismissed even by some who've never seen it!]

Now here's our situation. *Citizen Kane* made a huge splash in 1941 for a variety of reasons, then reportedly faded from public awareness, eclipsed by new films and changing technologies in moviemaking. A decade or so later *Kane* began to resurface and be re-evaluated by way of film societies, college campus screenings, and TV

showings, eventually garnering its reputation as the greatest film of all time.

In two years *The Raven* will be 70 years old. Is there a way THIS film could be a candidate for re-discovery and new recognition? We're going to work in that direction and do our humble best to contribute to such a recognition.

In the meantime, the above letter-writer has sent us two pieces of artwork which will warm the hearts of *Raven* fans who do dwell amongst our readership. Bill Allen has put the two greatest films of all time into the mix-master and come up with these two items.

(1) Orson Welles as "Old Man Kane" /Vollin/Lugosi, recreating their death scenes from both films at once!

(2) Joseph Cotton as Jed Leland/Bateman/Karloff being interviewed by William Alland's shadow.

Citizen Vollin was a man respected, feared, hated, yet loved as a god by a few. No two people held the same opinion of this great man.

I'm not a fan of "fan art", but these pieces by Mr. Allen show the work of an up in coming genius, and will be framed on my wall. Right alongside prized posters and stills of the two great films they portray.

There have been many books written on *Kane*, and I see nothing we could add. But soon we expect to present the ultimate filmbook issue devoted to *The Raven*, and enlist you readers in a campaign to revive awareness of this cinema masterpiece.

Stay tuned! Michael Copner]

I just have to comment on CM #37 (looking very raw and cool as all hell) and your wonderful *Deep Inside* piece. It reads to me that so much of the force that drives you to create *Cult Movies* comes from your personal vision of what this magazine is and should be, and not the dictates of a pedestrian consensus. All those who truly care



will join you for the ride. And what better way to hammer this point than with that great cover spread? Give 'em Hell, Copner!

I liken it to comic shops, with the BEST shops NOT designed for the general public, or the holiday shoppers, but for the built-in audience of fans who see waist-deep in the world of fandom. This is what I find so great about *Cult Movies*. The same loving respectful enthusiasm is given to Yvette Vickers and Bob Chinn, as is given to Boris Karloff and Harry Langdon because they are all legends who fit in this wild world of film. And without going completely diatribal on the subject of readers' objections, if I ever run into an article or column that I want nothing to do with, I treat it as if it were a radio or television and change the channel.

Love and luck,  
Scott Wallis  
Athens, TN

There are a number of enjoyable features in CM #37, including Joe Wawryznak's piece on forty years of Bond women. Wawryznak is obviously well-versed in Bond film lore, and in the dexterity titled "Nobody Does in Your Career Belter" he makes a convincing case for a 007 "curse" that stalks starlets who dare to share the cinema screen with the ultimate secret agent. A license to kill careers, so to speak.

Wawryznak may not be an avid follower of *The Avengers* television series, for he incorrectly writes that Honor Blackman "originated the part of Ms. Emma Peel." Blackman's character on *The Avengers* was the beautiful and capable Catherine Gale, the predecessor of the equally beautiful and capable Emma Peel, played by Diana Rigg.

Shirley Eaton's memorable turn as the doomed Jill Masterson in *Goldfinger* brought her international fame for a time. In November 1964 a gold-tinted Ms. Eaton graced the cover of *Life* magazine, which is indicative of the huge impact *Goldfinger* had during that period. For myself and many others it remains the best Bond picture of all, with Russ from Russia with Love and Dr. No coming in as close runner ups.

The exotic Martine Beswick had a small role in *The Offspring*, a film Wawryznak calls an "unjustly overlooked horror anthology sleeper," a definition I would concur with. Vincent Price and Clu Gulager did some fine work in this underrated 1956 feature from first time director Jeff Burt. During the 1970s Martine Beswick appeared in several American television programs, including an episode of *Rod Serling's Night Gallery* series entitled "The Last Laurel."

The lovely Joanna Pettet was in four episodes of *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*, including "The Caterpillar," a highly effective segment starring the late Laurence Harvey. And Ms. Pettet was aptly cast in the title role of "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes," a *Night Gallery* episode adapted from the classic Fritz Leiber story of the same name.

While many of the "Bond girls" never achieved sustained stardom in mainstream Hollywood, a number of them appeared in interesting and offbeat films and thereby attained cult star status among discerning movie enthusiasts. Martine Beswick, Honor Blackman, Shirley Eaton, Julie Ege and Caroline Munro, among others, have

CULT MOVIES

relatively small but devoted fan bases, and may indeed be remembered long after many of the more conventional actresses of their generation have been largely forgotten.

**Timothy M. Walters  
Muskogee, OK**

A few comments on issue #37

Put back the table of contents. I truly want to read the major cover stories first.

In the letters column, I liked the evaluation by Russ Bell on *Last Man on Earth*, and your article on it back in issue #32. As for Mr. Mighty Joe, I guess he saw the Steve Reeves bio you had in #25. I got acquainted with these dudes via the film *Witch's Curse*.

John O'Dowd's piece on Barbara Payton was a good story on a Hollywood tragedy. These things used to be "Mysteries" on "E" cable which would get me interested in various film personalities.

Your "Bond Curse" was a lot fairer on these ladies than the two 40th Anniversary specials recently on cable. One dog bone to pick. Why was Ms. Talisa Soto's vamp in the comedy *Sp. Hard* not mentioned? Nice info on Mr. Wood in *Demer Raps*.

Mr. Schaefer's take on the film "Theo Durrant" in the Macabre article got me thinking about "Leigh Beckett", the police chief in the John Carpenter written *Midnight*. Was she not an SF writer who did movie screenplays with John Wayne? Not to mention an early draft of *Empire Strikes Back* in 1977. Anyone care to elucidate on that mystery?

Tom Arnold of *Terminator* fame said he admired Reg Park. So I am also ordering #35 with your Reg Park article.

Thank you for an issue that let me exchange the real world for the meet world for just a little while.

**William Greer  
San Antonio, TX**

My first exposure to your magazine was issue #37. I don't know how I missed the first 36. I was especially keen by the high degree of research and detail by your contributors.

The article about William Castle's first horror film was very interesting and informative.

Having been a fan of 13 Ghosts, The Tingler, and most of all *Hercules*, I was not aware of Macabre. Chris Schaefer's examination of this master director's initial opus was fine insight into his films to come. I would like to learn more about the development of Castle's great cult movies.

Thanks for the homicidal memories,  
**Ted Miller  
Fountain Valley, CA**

I recently found my book, "Written Out of Television" listed on the Steve Reeves Web Site by Jim Nolt. Along with mine was the Cult Movies book, "Superboy And Superpup, The Lost Videos." As a longtime fan of Superman, and a TV researcher, I'd very much like have a copy of that book, which I'm ordering.

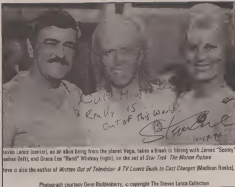
In the meantime, I've enclosed a still of me from my work as an alien in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

**Steve Lance  
Howell, NJ**

Really liked your recent article on Barbara Payton. What other genre mag would have given her such a loving tribute?

I recently saw a TV biography of Betty Paige. What a treat! Dave Stevens was showing his respect for Betty in a mature, loving way. I never saw him on TV, so I was amazed how natural he was. Thank goodness this wasn't an A+E production of Biography.

What an era the 1950s to '70s were for tasteful



Barbara Payton (center), as an alien being from the planet Vega, takes a break in living with James "Scotty" Cohen (left), and Grace Lee "Red" Whitney (right), on the set of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Steve is also the author of *Written Out of Television: A TV Lover's Guide to Cast Changes* (Madison Books).

Photograph courtesy Gene Roddenberry, © copyright The Steve Lance Collection

erotica. I recently got my hands on some old issues of *Cult Illustrated*, *Modern Man*, and *Figure Photography Quarterly*. All pictures and no advertising! Nothing matches classic erotica done in a tasteful form, and I'm glad your mag has the courage and integrity to include adult subjects in a respectful manner.

**Joe Antunas  
Toronto**

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# DEEP INSIDE CULT MOVIES

## COMING SOON:

Future articles in *Cult Movies* will include many exciting items.

- THE CAREER OF MARIO BAVA
- DISAPPOINTING HISTORY OF 3-D
- HISTORY OF A.L.P.
- THE STAGE CAREER OF BELA LUGOSI (Chronicling Lugosi's stage career from its beginning in September 1910 until January of 1919, and containing a complete list of his weekly performances, reviews from Hungarian Newspapers of the period, photographs and posters.)
- BERGMAN, BUNUEL, FELLINI: POETRY in the FANTASY/HORROR FILM
- EVELYN ANKERS (A book-length bio of her life and career, including 100 rare photos and pressbook items unseen for 60 years.)

And many other features never covered previously anywhere. We hope you continue to enjoy *Cult Movies Magazine*. On with the show!

**Michael Copner**  
Editor



**O.J.  
Simpson**



**Jerry  
Gross**

We in America think of Edison's 1903 film, *The Great Train Robbery* as the first film. With that in mind, we could say that the art of motion pictures is 100 years old this year.

In France the hundred year mark was last year, since the 1902 *A Trip to the Moon* was, at 22 minutes, the longest and most accomplished film from that country. And a sci-fi film at that!

Actually, movies go back to the century before, as the Lumiere Brothers were filming their "actualities" since March, 1895. They shot over 1500 scenes of daily life and settings in Saigon, Moscow, New York, Jerusalem and elsewhere to be brought back to Paris and shown to enthusiastic audiences curious about this new blending of art and technology.

"The greatest art form of the century," is how the movies were touted by critics, fans, and publicists hired to promote the business. And perhaps they were all correct, since film demanded the combining of fiction writing, photography, acting, music, and many related arts and crafts — more and more as the movies grew in reach and scope.

Whether we can pick 2003 to rightly celebrate the birth of the movies is doubtful. But we strive to grow in reach and scope, and I feel our cover story on O.J. Simpson demonstrates that fact. I'd been a fan of Mr. Simpson from film and football, but was unaware that he'd made twenty films until I read the article by Joe Wawrzyniak. Most film fans I've spoken to were likewise unaware of the output of O.J.'s career, and could usually name only 5 or 6 titles at best.

Like many Americans, I may have the uneasy feeling that anything Mr. Simpson did do or will do in his career, became overshadowed by the headlines of 1994-95 regarding his trial for the death of Nicole Brown Simpson. Like most people in Los Angeles, I was glued to the tube every day court was in session, and began to relate to all persons concerned as I would to close family members. The announcement of the verdict was, according to *Time* magazine, "The single most suspenseful moment in television history." And when it was over, and those people would no longer be an evolving part of my daily life, I experienced a deep post-trial depression that was a commonly reported phenomenon and reality for people in Los Angeles.

Joe, the author of our controversial "007 Girls" article in our last issue, has come up with another eyebrow raising topic in the Simpson essay. It's done in Joe's strange fashion, but I don't feel it's frivolous or out of place for our magazine.

Another hard to follow and swallow item concerns the death of exploitation film distributor Jerry Gross who died on November 20, 2002, and was laid to rest some three months later. I was among the paltry 7 mourners who attended his funeral. I was one of his pall bearers, and it was the second time in six months I'd served such a function for someone I'd never known in life.

My first connection to Jerry Gross was probably in my teenage years, when I lied about my age to get in to see the X-rated cartoon feature, *Fritz the Cat*. Since then I've seen many of his cult films and been impressed by his brazen approach to film promotion. Our tribute to him will give you a close look at his method of operation and a feel for his way of getting audience attention.



A rather troubling thing immediately dawned on me a day or two after I began writing my O.J. Simpson article (found elsewhere in this issue of *Cah Movies*). The morbid fact is this: a startlingly sizeable number of people have kicked the proverbial bucket after appearing with O.J. Simpson in a flick. Could there be a connection between the thespic football star and the many now-dead Hollywood stars he's acted on-screen with? Could the Juice be behind such a complex and truly chilling rampage of murder and sacrifice, unnoticed for years despite obvious clues etched forever in film prints across the nation? We now present the evidence, but you dear readers are the judge. Let the conspiracies and book deals begin!

#### The Uncensored O.J. Celluloid Death List

**The Klugean** - Lee Marvin, Cameron Mitchell, Richard Burton, and Hoke Howell all appear in this baby. All four of these cats are now cold meat. And here's the kicker: Cam croaked in '84 while Burton bought it in '84. Yep, that's right, Cam and Dick died ten years apart from each other. Very interesting.

**The Towering Inferno** - Steve McQueen, William Holden, and Fred Astaire pop up in this smokin' dilly. All three have long since ate it. What a coincidence, man.

**Killer Force** - Telly Savalas stars in this one; he's since gone to that giant lollipop factory in the sky. My, how curious.

**Boyz** - Chuck Connors, Vic Morrow, Robert Reed, Lorne Greene, and Benis James are among the many folks in the cast of this one. As fate would now have it, all five of these fine fellows are no longer with us. Is anyone starting to notice a certain unnerving recurring motif yet?

**The Cassandra Crossing** - Bert Lancaster, Lee Strasberg, and Lionel Stander disgrace themselves by appearing in this mondo stinko shithanger of a flick. Fortunately, they no longer have to live this celluloid sludgeball down, they're all dead now. The plot thickens.

**Cascom One Telly** - Savalas appears in this baby too. Did he and O.J. have something going on between themselves behind the scenes? Maybe. Then again, maybe not.

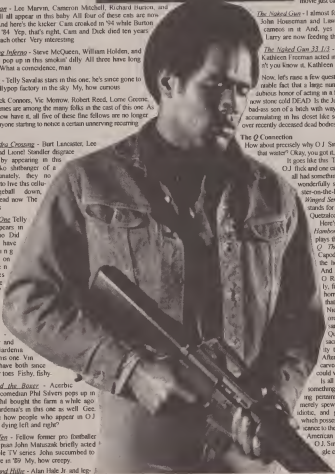
**Firepower** - Billy Barty and Vincent Gardenia appear in this one. Vin and Billy have both since curled their toes. Fishy, fishy.

**Goldie and the Boxer** - Acerbic vaudeville comedian Phil Silvers pops up in this one. Phil bought the farm a while ago. Vincent Gardenia's in this one as well. Gee, ever notice how people who appear in O.J. flicks keep dying left and right?

**Fast and Ten** - Fellow former pro football turned thespian John Matuszak briefly acted on this cable TV series. John succumbed to heart failure in '89. My, how creepy.

**Hombre and Hille** - Alan Hale Jr. and leg-

# O.J. Linked to Multiple Deaths in Aztec Ritual Movie Shocker!



endary silent film actress Lillian Gish are featured in this unbearably cutesy kiddie pic. Both of them are earnestly pushing up daises. Hey, somebody call Oliver Stone!

**Back to the Beach** - Alan Hale Jr. Also has a cameo in this one. Stevie Rae Vaughan has a great bit part as well, doing a wry killer reverber guitar duel with surf guitar king Dick Dale. Stevie Rae, one of the all-time great guitarists, tragically died in a helicopter accident (shades of Vic Morrow, dude). Screw Oliver Stone. Now we - or at least I - know that O.J. has been up to no good for quite some time. I mean, all these people buying it after being in an O.J. movie just can't be mere happenstance.

**The Naked Gun** - I almost forgot about this one. John Houseman and Lawrence Tierney have nice cameos in it. And, yes Virginia, both John and Larry are now feeding the maggots.

**The Naked Gun 33 1/3** - Jerry Lewis film regular Kathleen Freeman acted in this sucker. And, wouldn't you know it, Kathleen kicked a few years back.

Now, let's raise a few questions about the grim, undeniable fact that a large number of folks who had the audacious honor of acting in a film with O.J. Simpson are now stone cold DEAD. Is the Juice a genuinely malevolent bad-ass son of a bitch with way too many nasty skeletons accumulating in his closet like so many flies swarming all over recently deceased dead bodies? Heavens, man. Real heavy.

#### The Q Connection

How about precisely why O.J. Simpson bagged his wife and that waster? Okay, you got it, pal.

It goes like this. Two people who acted in an O.J. flick and one cat who scored an O.J. movie all had something to do with Larry Cohen's wonderfully sardonic and spirited monster-on-the-loose lampoon *Q: The Winged Serpent* (The "Q" in the title stands for the beasty Aztec bird god, Quetzalcoatl).

Here's the three people: *Hombre* and *Hille*'s Candy Clark, plays the supportive girlfriend in *Q*. *The Naked Gun 33 1/3*'s John Capodice appears in *Q* as one of the hoodlums fed to the beast. And *No Place to Hide*'s Robert O'Randall supplied the spookily, fabulously cornball schlock-horror score. Does this mean that O.J. Simpson stuffed both Nicole and Ron Goldman in order to appease the insatiable vengatory will of the ancient Quetzalcoatl, thus giving the sacred plumed serpent the ability to exist in our dimension?

After all, Nicole was savagely carved up with a knife, so this could very well be the actual case.

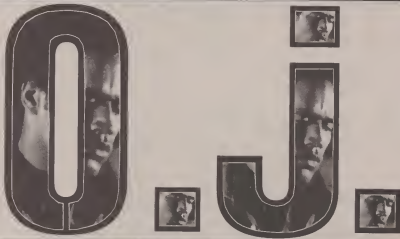
Is all this pontificating leading to something relevant and earth-shattering pertaining to the Juice? Or am I merely spewing forth a lot of needless, idiotic, and grossly inaccurate bullshit which possesses little, if any, true significance to the man, myth, legend, and all-American sports hero who is (was?) O.J. Simpson? Me? I ain't got a single clue, man!

- Joe Wawrzyniak

**t**o be perfectly honest, I failed to see what exactly the big hairy deal was about football running back-turned-actor O.J. Simpson standing trial for murder in 1994-1995. Perhaps I didn't discern any hoopla from O.J.'s trial because I have seen all of the man's movies - hence, I knew the trial was nothing more than a culmination of recurrent themes found in each and every O.J. flick. It's pretty easy to see why Orenthal James Simpson was marked for big screen stardom: He's handsome, clean-cut (comedian Paul Mooney said it best when he bitingly cracked in the cable comedy special *But Seriously '94*: "That boy ain't been a nigger since he was seventeen"), decent, affable, and projects a certain all-American jock charisma. Also, O.J. is considered to be pretty sexy in an ingenuous sort of way by the ladies. Let's face it: O.J.'s got plenty of style, if very little substance.

But as an actor, O.J. just doesn't cut it. O.J.'s got all the personality of dried-up mud, has a face that's more inexpressive than a

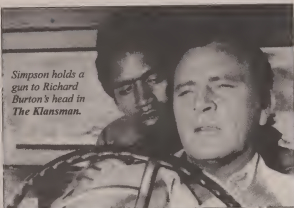
## The Juice is Stranger than Fiction: The Ominous Cinematic Legacy of



# SIMPSON

slab of granite, and possesses a dialogue delivery that's flatter than the titular pulped polecat in Loudon Wainwright III's immortal bluegrass-on-acid ditty "Dead Skunk" (The Loudon reference is fairly congruent because Wainwright actually mentions Mr. Simpson in "Road Ode," a song about the perils of touring: "Runnin' through airports at 43 may be good for O.J./ But it's not for me"). In other words, O.J. ain't no Woody Strode, who's perhaps the finest example of that rare fellow who gracefully made the transition from gridiron warrior to thespian. Moreover, Simpson got nothin' on big, bad Jim Brown or the redoubtable Fred "the Hammer" Williamson, two seriously kick-ass cats who could out-macho O.J. on any given weekday (and probably twice on a Saturday). However, to his credit O.J. never played himself in a smug, self-congratulatory biopic, as did Muhammed Ali and Evel Knievel, who badly portrayed themselves in the megabombs *The Greatest* and *Viva Knievel*, respectively (*Back to the Beach* really doesn't count because O.J. only cameos as himself for about a minute). But he came close with the real-life docu-bore of *Juice on the Loose*, which was directed by none other than George Romero of *Night of the Living Dead* fame (!!!). Still, O.J.'s wretched attempts at emoting, or even being himself, leave a whole lot to be desired.

Simpson holds a gun to Richard Burton's head in *The Klansman*.



## The Klansman (1974)

Before you watched him hurl white people's luggage for Hertz, O.J. made his pitifully inauspicious debut in the spectacularly lurid, sordid, torrid Southern-fried blaxploitation cheeseball *The Klansman*. It's a pretty sleazy and unbearable flick. The plot centers on a sexy blonde white woman who's raped by a black man; this in turn causes all the racist hillbilly white guys in a low-rent Mason-Dixie line podunk to go crazy and start brutally slaying black males in retaliation for this heinous atrocity (the rape, not the film). Does the vicious sexual assault of the honky babe (played by a pre-Dynasty Linda Evans) in any way represent O.J.'s bestial carnal rage when his licentious desires are not immediately appeased? Or maybe the white gal's harsh defilement gives the viewer insight into O.J.'s salacious penchant for

throughout the shooting) that he's a one-man black revolutionary who's declaring all-out war on white oppression. (In reality Simpson was the exact opposite, a neutral and apolitical figure who wanted to have nothing to do with radical militant groups like the Black Panthers.) Is *The Klansman's* exploitation of racism a substantial (and undeniably grim) confirmation of the sad fact that "the Man," that heinous, omnipotent, ubiquitous all-Caucasian entity, has been constantly oppressing O.J. and his people - the black race - for way too long? Was O.J.'s killing of Ron Goldman done to tip the scales of justice more in the black man's favor?

Overall, this expensive flop (it cost \$5 million to make, a really hefty sum back in '74) qualifies as an absolute turkey. Among the unfortunate folks who royally embarrass

(hey, everyone has their bad days), and the Staple Singers soulfully belt out the theme song, "The Good Christian People." And as for O.J., his big moment is when he wastes a guy during a funeral! O.J. also sports a curly, messy rat's nest 'fro and floppy bell bottom jeans. Oh, and O.J.'s first-ever line of dialogue is the truly deathless "Come on, Henry!"

## The Towering Inferno (1974)

O.J. hit the relative big time with his next cinematic outing: Irwin Allen's big budget, all-star, and 100% deliciously schlocky disaster corker *The Towering Inferno*. The plot: a huge, sprawling, and enormously costly skyscraper catches ablaze, and a lot of well-known people as well as a few eminently expendable no-name schmooles get barbecued. (The building of course shares an uncomfortable similarity with O.J.'s agonizingly drawn-out murder trial, which was unquestionably a huge, sprawling, and enormously costly disaster of monolithic proportions.)

Lotsa folks buy it in assorted grisly ways. No-name character thesp Norman Burton is the first fellow to eat fatal flame. Robert Wagner gets roasted while booking across his office floor in strenuous slow-motion (some sage advice to anyone who gets caught in a giant flame-engulfed superstructure: never, ever run in slow motion; instead, tear ass like there's no tomorrow), defenestration (i.e., Rob's secretary gets sent flying out a window by a tremendous gust of smoke), a dozen folks in an elevator get cooked, a lady in a glass elevator takes the mighty plunge. Richard Chamberlain and Robert Vaughn also prove that they can't fly, and no-name character thesp Gregory Sierra gets crushed by the building's roof at the very end of the film. Could all of these people fatally falling from high places symbolize O.J. Simpson's similarly lethal fall from grace?

There's a great "spot the incredibly famous and glamorous beautiful people" cast in this red-hot mambo: Paul Newman, Faye Dunaway, the true King of All Men Steve McQueen, William Holden (whether Will drank heavily during this production I'm not sure), Fred Astaire (as an aging con man!), Susan Blakely, Don Gordon and *Robocop* film trilogy regular Felton Perry as brave firemen, and Dabney Coleman. This blazing bumburner was directed by John Guillemin, who next did that ultimate '70s dud remake - yes, the '76 *Kong Kong* abomination.

And what about O.J.? Why, I was just getting to him. In *The Towering Inferno* O.J. plays a heroic security guard, who saves both a kitten and a little girl. O.J.'s big emotive moment here is the infamous elevator scene: while anxiously awaiting the lift, O.J. tries out

## by JOE WAWRZYNIAK

sweet, juicy, succulent young Caucasian blonde femme mead?

Well, a bunch of indignant KKK members decide to off one of O.J.'s buds in order to avenge the dirty deed. And boy do these hideous hicks do a real nasty number on O.J.'s pard: they castrate the poor schmoe and ventilate his ass with shotguns! O.J., as "Garth," witnesses the horrendous killing and promptly starts wasting racist KKK white bastards as if was open season on despicable hayseeds. Does O.J.'s blowing away a sizable number of KKK guys serve as a primer to O.J. blessing Ron Goldman? Perhaps. Later in the flick O.J. explains to impassive Southern aristocrat Richard Burton (who sports a lilting Southern accent and was allegedly hittin' the booze

themselves in this dreck are:

- \* Lee Marvin as the earnest but ineffectual sheriff;
- \* Cameron Mitchell as a scuzzwad deputy (Cam's vile rap of black civil rights leader Lola Falana rates as the flick's definite low point.);
- \* Former Bond babe Luciana Paluzzi
- \* Hoke Howell as Evans' insensitive racist boor husband;
- \* Lee De Broux as a stern racist priest, and
- \* David Huddleston as the seedy burg's racist good ol' boy mayor.

Adding to this celluloid hall of shame is the fact that respected director Samuel Fuller co-wrote the script, three-time 007 director Terence Young called the shots on this baby

## Simpson and LeVar Burton in TV's Roots

the pained facial expressions he later reused ad nauseam during the trial. (This scene was subsequently parodied to hilarious effect in the movie *Fame*.) Interestingly, O.J. is the token black name in the whole predominantly white star-studded cast. Does this sadly affirm O.J.'s status as an outsider in whitebread America? Does the raging blaze represent O.J.'s uncontrollable, ever-present bloodlust? O.J.'s equally overactive and insurmountable sex drive? A great golden opportunity to toast marshmallows that nobody takes advantage of? Or maybe the fiery mess implies that O.J. deserves to have a onetime only sitting on Of Sparky? (Before you ask, I personally think that O.J. should be fried.)

### Killer Force (1975)

O.J. next appeared in the merely okay action heist flick *Killer Force*. Here Simpson plays Alexander, a laid-back, tight-tipped mercenary who along with several other low-life bounty hunters plans to steal a stash of diamonds from a high-tech desert mine. Christopher Lee delightfully overplays the juicy villainous part of O.J.'s slimy Brit partner in crime, a gruff, brusque English swine named Major Chilton. Halfway through the flick, Major Chilton savagely slices up this cute blonde prostitute with a sharp serrated knife! For Major Chilton sludgeball rates as one real warped pup; he likes to make sardonic one-liners while killing people and always has this sickeningly wide smile firmly placed on his fearlessly narrow face. Does the gruesome slashing of the prosthetic eerily foretell Nicole Brown Simpson's equally brutal fate, a ghastly end which included getting all carved up something nasty with a large bad-ass blade? And did O.J. take any pointers on brutally butchering lascivious young white women from Major Chilton, a blithely sadistic nutcase with a leering grin and more-caustic-than-a-gallon-of-lime sense of humor?

These creepily present incidental tidbits aside, *Killer Force* doesn't add up to anything more than a strictly passable time-waster, due largely to a dead-as-slow-pace and an overly convoluted plot. However, it does at the very least boast a solid cast: Telly Savalas as the diamond mine's head of security (a man so cool and tough that he wears sunglasses indoors), longtime favorite Peter Fonda as a bearded, wise-ass deputy sheriff who helps the mercenaries pull off the heist, the beautiful former Bond babe Maud Adams as Peter's fetching girlfriend, and Hugh O'Brian as another one of the mercenaries. Seasoned old pro Val Guest directed this thing, presumably in his sleep (in better days Guest helmed



the superbly intelligent end-of-the-world sci-fi knockout *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*).

*Killer Force* marks the first time O.J. gets beefed in a flick. It happens towards the end of the picture. O.J. gets pinned on a sand dune by some cops, takes a slug in the belly, then takes another hit in the chest. Next thing you know O.J. is rolling down the sand dune, by the time he makes it to the bottom he's already cold meat. Comments one guy on O.J.'s untimely passing: "Dead is dead." No shit.

### Roots (TV, 1977)

O.J.'s thespic career hit a real peak when he acted in the epic TV mini-series *Roots*. Naturally, O.J. plays a slave fighting for his freedom, a role a sizable number of readers might deem autobiographical. Why? Think about it: O.J. started out in the projects, struggled academically through high school, found salvation in football, worked that athlete angle into a profitable career and opulent lifestyle, parlayed his sports fame into a secondary career as an actor, then when everything seemed hunky dory screwed up big time by getting arrested and brought up on murder charges. We all know how grueling and embarrassing (and disheartening, as far as that ridiculous "not guilty" verdict is concerned) the painfully drawn-out trial was. In a sense the poor guy's gone full circle; he's gone from the bottom to the top and back on down to the bottom. Currently he's hovering a few inches above said bottom and barely hanging in there. Sure sounds a lot like the crappy deal most slaves got when they finally won their freedom; they didn't advance much in society for a long, long time after slavery was rightfully abolished. However, O.J.'s only got himself to blame for his recent lousy lot in life, but that's enough of that. Let's get back to *Roots*. Does

the casting of O.J. as a slave serve as a grave affirmation of the fact that O.J., like many other blacks, is an unfortunate victim of white oppression? Better yet, O.J. gets to do his first topless scenes in this baby. These scenes are significant in understanding the man who is O.J. Simpson; his barechested antics in this major television event proves O.J.'s willingness to bare his soul - and much, much more, for those who dig that sort of thing - in order to appease the masses. Furthermore, the topless scenes show us - the humble, undeserving commonplace multitude - what a truly selfless and modest fellow O.J. really is, that he's a most vulnerable man. Like, O.J. shoulda capped a damn Emmy for his barechested bravado here; by taking off his shirt a lot he manages to compensate significantly for his severe thespic ineptitude. Otherwise, this dry, overlong, self-important history lesson is pretty negligible I was forced to watch this boring monstrosity in my 8th grade history class. I'd rather see *Mandingo*, which is tons funnier and much shorter. Still, *Roots* does have one helluva cast: Chuck Connors, Lorne Greene, Vic Morrow, Robert Reed (the banal suburbanite duffel pop on *The Brady Bunch*), Ralph White, LeVar Burton, John Amos, Cicely Tyson, Louis Gossett, Jr., Brian James (in a bit part as an illiterate slave runner), the list is both endless and overwhelming (two adjectives one could also use to describe the unbelievably bloated and protracted murder trial).

### The Cassandra Crossing (1977)

O.J. Simpson's film career next promptly took a nosedive into the lowest bowels of cinematic slop when he lent his by-now much-sought-after presence to the horrendously putrid disaster stinkerooie *The Cassandra Crossing*. Man, in this flick one fetid slice of curdled

cheese! The dumb-dumb-dumb plot is about this terrorist who boards a train and spreads a highly contagious lethal plague he caught during a bungled government bombing to the other passengers. These other passengers are an understandably grim and listless bunch of fallen-on-hard-times name thespians glumly portraying a real insane assortment of extremely unlikely (and unflikable) folks:

- \* Richard Harris as a dour doctor;
- \* Sophia Loren as his writer ex-wife;
- \* Famed Method acting teacher Lee Strasberg (who offers a thick sliver of irritatingly over-ripe ham large enough to feed a small third world country) as a sweet of Jewish concentration camp survivor;
- \* Ava Gardner as a decadent old rich bag;
- \* Martin Sheen as a mountain-climbing ladies man with a severe smack jones (!);
- \* Lionel Stander as a calm, friendly conductor (Lionel has essentially the same role George Kennedy has in all the *Airport* movies);
- \* Burt Lancaster as a coldly pragmatic army general who has to cover up the whole dead-plague-on-a-train business
- \* And last and certainly least: O.J. as an undercover narcotics officer who boards the train disguised as a priest!

As one can tell from my vitriolic remarks so far, *The Cassandra Crossing* is a steaming lump of pure celluloid shit. George Pan Cosmatos (mis)directs this sucker with stupefying maladroitness; his single most distinctive directorial touch is a ludicrous over-use of people's wide, buggy, bloodshot eyes.

Now, it's question time once again, boys and girls. Of the two distinctive and radically contrasting personas O.J. affects in the flick which one most aptly reflects the "real" O.J.? Is it the gritty, hard-bitten, no-bullshit cop, a Judas man who's no stranger to death, murder and vice? Or is it the gentle, unassuming priest, a moral, pious, upstanding man of the cloth? Like, it's the duality of O.J., dude! The film's title alludes to a decrepit old bridge that

the train crosses at the film's conclusion. Does the rickety, hazardous, closed-down bridge in any way represent the brittle sense of security and serenity O.J. once possessed in his originally calm, now quite tempestuous life? And how 'bout that contagious disease; does the plague symbolize how the annoying inescapable O.J. Simpson trial infected every known means of the media?

Moreover, *The Cassandra Crossing* features the second time O.J. gets sent to that giant football stadium in the sky. Here's how the scene goes: O.J. and a few others are engaged in a feverish shoot-out with some nasty-ass government dudes in a smoke-filled train car. There's a little girl in the middle of the car, bullets are whizzing over her head. O.J. yells to the little girl: "Run to me, sweets!" the little girl paralyzed with fear, doesn't budge. O.J. runs into the middle of the car, grabs the beleaguered tyke, runs back to the safe side of the car, takes a slug in the back, lets go of the kid, slumps up against a wall, and - YES!!! - dies.

**CAPRICORN ONE (1978)** After the considerable debacle of *The Cassandra Crossing*, O.J. did a complete about face: he tackled a sizable role in a - dare I say it? - genuinely terrific movie: the kick-ass sci-fi conspiracy thriller *Capricorn One*. The rip-snorting plot has three astronauts - James Brolin, Sam Waterston, and O.J. - who are forced to fake the first landing on Mars when the capsule proves to be defective. The mock landing goes over smashingly, but naturally there's a hitch afterwards: the astronauts are made to seem like they perished during reentry and are deemed expendable by NASA (led by a hatefully smooth Hal Holbrook). The astronauts manage to escape from NASA's evil clutches and make a desperate break for freedom. The often on the money Peter Hyams wrote and directed this socko thriller; his clever, witty script and lively, solid direction keep this sucker on a nuttally fine course from stirring

start to fantastic finish. (Hyams' other co-targeted features include the unfairly forgotten buddy-buddy cop item *Busting*, the bleakly effective futuristic Western *Outland*, the really damn good *Time Cop*, and the enjoyably over-the-top *Die Hard* clone *Sudden Death*.) The standout cast further adds to the pic's tremendous entertainment value:

- \* Elliott Gould as a snoopy, slovenly reporter;
- \* The ever-arresting Karen Black as one of Elliott's old flames;
- \* The delightful, husky-voiced Brenda Vaccaro as Brolin's wife;
- \* James Karen as a smarmy politician (is there any other kind?);
- \* Robert Walden as the studious radar monitor wonk who discovers that the astronauts' signals are stemming from Nevada;
- \* Telly Savalas as a crabby, foul-mouthed crop duster ("Keep your goddamn head down!"); and
- \* James B. Sicking as a nefarious low-level NASA button man who's in on the whole wicked plot.

Kudos also to Jerry Goldsmith's fast, jaunty score. *Capricorn One* rates as the best-ever film O.J. acted in.

And, lest I forget, I gotta analyze this honey for you dear readers. For starters, there's the glaring gaffe that's certain to amuse astronomy majors: the Mars landing is faked with a lunar module that, in reality, would have been crushed by the red planet's atmospheric pressure! Does the obviously illogical use of a lunar module in any way suggest that the murder charges O.J. was shipped with are in fact bogus? Did the whole phony Mars landing conspiracy in some way predict the whole murder fracas, including and especially a few claims by the enraged black community that O.J. was set-up from the very start? Are these questions starting to annoy you yof? Interestingly, O.J.'s wife never becomes hip to what's really going on. Does her blithe benightedness represent O.J.'s real-life (and now dead) old lady, Nicole, who probably



**L. to R: Simpson, Karen Black, Sam Waterston, and James Brolin in *Capricorn One***

never thought that O.J. would kill her?

Later on in the flick O.J. gets to run through the desert. Does O.J. running through desert prefigure O.J. booking to his Bronco after wasting Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman? And what is O.J. running from? White oppression? A deep, dark dirty little secret that he constantly refuses to admit to both himself and the rest of the world? Some phony-ass bum rap that somebody is trying to slap on him? Or is O.J. just running for the exercise?

More importantly, *Capricorn One* is one of the few flicks to feature two of Barbara Streisand's husbands in its cast: Elliott Gould is one of her ex-husbands while James Brolin is her current better half. Did O.J. kill Nicole and Ron Goldman to impress Barbara? Or did Babs have both Nicole and Goldman bagged and pin the rap on poor O.J.?

Lastly, O.J. does eat it in the flick; alas, since *Capricorn One* is a PG-rated movie his death happens off-screen. Oh, well. You can't have everything.

**Firepower (1979)** After his triumph with *Capricorn One*, O.J. hit another dismal-yet dreadful low with *Firepower*, an aggressively torpid, confusingly-plotted action yawner. Here O.J. plays Caulit, a professional thief who helps renegade CIA agent James Coburn get the goods on a corrupt all-powerful millionaire who's engaged in all sorts of illegal activities. This extremely soporific snoozer was limply directed by the usually more punchy and up to par Michael Winner, who despite having done this crud still makes highly in my book for the stomp-ass Charles Bronson doozies *The Mechanic*, *The Stone Killer*, and *Death Wish*. Moreover, *Firepower* does have a good cast:

- \* Sophia Loren as Coburn's ex-old lady;
- \* Eli Wallach as some rich dude;
- \* Vincent Gardenia as a CIA head;
- \* Victor Mature as the world's wealthiest man;
- \* Real-life boxer and notorious wife beater Jake "Raging Bull" La Motta as Wallach's bodyguard (I wonder if O.J. got any sage advice from Jake on how to properly handle

the little woman if she ever gets out of line?).

O.J. really gets to strut his stuff here. He's first introduced robbing a bank, gets to sit around a boat with his shirt open (hubba, hubba!), and at one point exclaims to Coburn: "Hey, man - I don't kill people!" (Yeah, right - and Ted Bundy was a very gentle, polite, and harmless first date).

*Firepower* also has lotsa stuff exploding in it (cars, houses, boats, the usual rubbish). After *The Towering Inferno* this is the second most explosion-heavy O.J. Simpson movie. Do all the explosions in both films prophesize how the almighty cannon of fate eventually shot a king-sized ball of massive chaos and destruction into O.J.'s formerly tranquil, but now and probably forever messed-up life? Worse yet, O.J. is called both "nigger" and "that black" by the honky bad guys. Does this once again affirm the evil palefaces' constant persecution of both O.J. and his people?

*Firepower* is handsomely made, but the poorly developed characters, slack pacing, an overly complicated narrative, and a crippling lack of any high impact action scenes sink this no-does, therefore making it more boring than watching two turtles copulate. However, there is one undeniably bitchin'-ass scene in which the Juice gets juiced. Please allow me to explain this glorious moment in more explicit detail. O.J.'s on this boat, dig? Some bad cat in a helicopter flies by. The bad cat's got a machine gun, comprende? O.J., who's also packin' some serious heat, and the helicopter dude exchange a few rounds. Then O.J. tries desperately to start the boat. The helicopter dude circles to the front of the boat and sprays it with gunfire, subsequently perforating O.J.'s all-American jock ass! Some gas starts leaking from the boat. You get this breathtakingly would-be poignant shot of O.J.'s corpse lying face down on the boat's floor, a dumbfounded expression plastered on his mug. The nasty dude in the whirly-bird shoots the gas. The boat explodes! And O.J.'s stiff gets turned into a big ol' piece of extra-crispy fried bacon!

**First & Ten (TV Series)** In the '80s O.J. decided to take a (sadly) temporary

break from motion pictures and became a regular on the cable series *First & Ten*, a staggeringly stupid, grievous and highly unwatchable show about a boorish football team and their assorted obnoxious antics. The show was basically a ghastly mix of a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the business of football (ala the outstanding seriocomic gem *North Dallas Forty*) and the crass lowbrow sexual japes found in your average *Porky's* pic.

O.J. played the semi-autobiographical role of an aging gridiron warrior who retires from football and becomes a co-owner of the team. Despite the fact that O.J.'s character on the show was married, he still winds up becoming involved with his attractive secretary. (O.J. also had a fling in the '77 made-for-TV feature *A Killing Affair*, in which Simpson played a homicide detective who gets a little something on the side with his lady partner Elizabeth Montgomery.) O.J. in real life has a notorious reputation as a lecherous, indefatigable womanizer. Is O.J.'s character having an extramarital affair an example of art (and I use the word "art" very loosely here) imitating life? Did O.J. bag Nicole because she found out about his cheatin', two-timin', unfaithful ways and threatened to divorce him? Is O.J. too damn cheap and shameless to have undertook a potentially costly and messy divorce? Can bears defecate in other places besides the woods?

**Hambone and Hillie (1984)** O.J. made his belated and, to be brutally honest, less than sterling cinematic comeback with *Hambone and Hillie*, a dumb, mawkish, simplistic kiddie flick. (Yep, O.J. did a children's movie. What's next - a Saturday morning kiddie program, "O.J.'s Playhouse"? Or maybe I should say "O.J.'s Slaughterhouse"? Or perhaps even "O.J.'s Penthouse"? Man, the choices are downright endless...) The super-stupid story is about this mangy mutt named Hambone who's accidentally separated from his elderly owner Hillie (silent film legend Lillian Gish, who deserves much better than this idiotic goop). Hambone makes a perilous trek from New York to Los Angeles in order

## Orenthal James Simpson Filmography

*Medical Center* (TV episode)

*Dragnet* (TV episode)

*Marcus Welby, M.D.* (TV episode)

*Why?* (1971) (unreleased movie)

Hertz television commercials

*The Klansman* (1974) aka *The Burning Cross*

*The Juice Is Loose* (1974/documentary)

*The Towering Inferno* (1974)

*Killer Force* (1975) aka *The Diamond Mercenaries* \*

*The Cassandra Crossing* (1977) \*

*Roots* (1977-78/TV mini-series)

*A Killing Affair* (1977/television)

*Capricorn One* (1978) \*

*Firepower* (1979) \*

*Goldie and the Bigger* (1979/television)

*Denour* (1979/television)

*Goldie and the Bigger Go to Hollywood*

(1980/television)

*First and Ten* (cable series)

*Hambone and Hillie* (1984)

*Back to the Beach* (1987)

*The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!*

(1988)

*No Place to Hide* (1991) \*

*In the Heat of the Night* (1992/TV episode)

*The Naked Gun 2 1/2: The Smell of Fear!* (1992)

*CIA Code Name: Alex* (1992)

*Frogman* (1993/unaired TV pilot)

*The Naked Gun 3 1/2: The Final Insult* (1994)

*Natural Born Killers* (1994) \*\*

*The Infamous Exercise Video as Seen at the Triad*

(1994)

\* O.J. was in it, but

\*\* actual footage from O.J. trial (aka, O.J. versus, dude!)



## Simpson and "Hambone" in Hambone and Hillie

- \* Timothy Bottoms as Gish's son;
- \* Anne Lockhart as Bottoms' wife; and
- \* Perennial hippie wanderer Robert Walker, Jr. as a philosophical drifter.

It's hard to believe that veteran trash flick producer Sandy Howard backed this dud. (Sandy's other credits include the uproariously cruddy disaster pic *City on Fire*, the excruciatingly tedious haunted boat clunker *Death Ship*, the tough, sleazy actioner *Vice Squad*, and the below par Civil War zombie snoozer *The Supernaturals*.)

While *Hambone and Hillie* isn't exactly the worst flick O.J.'s ever appeared in (*The Klugean* cops that top dishonor), it's still an awful film.

**Back to the Beach (1987)** O.J. continued his cinematic losing streak by doing a numbskull cameo as himself in *Back to the Beach*, an imbecilic and wholly unnecessary exercise in synthetic '60s nostalgia. It's an ersatz remembrance of the way things most definitely weren't in that particular era and proves beyond a reasonable doubt that one can't accurately recapture a specific vibe which defined a certain era. Of course, this failure to recapture that vibe undoubtedly parallels O.J.'s dismal post-trial life, in which Mr. Simpson will never regain the prestige and respectability he worked hard to amass prior to the whole murder trial affair. While O.J.'s part in this dodo is mercifully brief, the fact that he's in this brainless, senseless, tedious clunker at all still constitutes as a gargantuan blemish on the Juice's already spotty cinematic oeuvre. If you haven't guessed by now, this is that 20-years-later-Frankie-and-Annette-Beach-Party-reunion-flop we all could have done without.

O.J. pops up just after the opening credits finish rolling. He's seen in the airport. Annette Funicello mistakes one of his bags for hers; O.J. takes the bag away from Annette. (The bag, by the way, is made out of pigskin.) O.J. grabs his bag and starts running through the airport, jumping over other people's luggage the whole time. Alas, O.J. trips over a suitcase and flies face first into a pile of bags. Worse yet, Frankie Avalon steps on O.J.'s hand. Does O.J. landing flat on his face in this flick foreshadow the profound humiliation he experienced because of the agonizing (and ridiculously protracted) murder trial? And what the hell is O.J. running away from? His evil, darker, more violent side? White oppression? A phony murder rap? A bad agent who makes him act in way too many lamewad movies? And, most importantly, does Frankie Avalon stepping on O.J.'s hand serve as yet another grim confirmation that the inex-

haustibly wicked "the Man" has always been figuratively stepping on O.J. and his people?

Of course, *Back to the Beach* couldn't qualify as an especially woful O.J. outing unless a lot of well-known folks popped up in it and in the process seriously sullied their heretofore untarnished reputations. There's no shortage of mind-numbingly dipstick turns here:

- \* Connie Stevens as Annette's rival for Frankie's affections;
- \* *Get Smart*'s Don Adams as an uptight killjoy harbor master, Bob Denver (the titular klutzy schnook on *Gilligan's Island*) as a bartender;
- \* Alan Hale, Jr. in his second consecutive O.J. flick as "the Skipper;"
- \* *Leave It to Beaver* siblings Tony Dow and Jerry Mathers as a pair of surf contest judges who do an awesomely abominable Siskel and Ebert schtick (why anyone would want to impersonate those two self-important nitwits is beyond me);
- \* Barbra Billingsley - the Beav's mom - as the surf contest emcee;
- \* Eddie "Kookie" Byrnes as a parking lot attendant; and
- \* Dweeby '80s infantile nerd camp icon Pee-wee Herman doing a downright appalling spastic mauling of the Trashman's immortal surf frat-rock classic "Surfer Bird." (As we all know by now, Paul Rubens, the guy who plays Pee-wee, was eventually arrested for allegedly exposing himself in a Florida porno theater and suffered a painfully significant fall from grace as a result of this unfortunate incident. Clearly, the similarities between Rubens and Simpson are a bit too there for comfort.)

**The Naked Gun (1988)** O.J. managed somehow - and unfortunately, I might add - to rebound from *Back to the Beach*; he has a sizeable co-starring role in the hit sketch comedy *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad*. O.J. plays Edward Norberg, an undercover cop who, in the flick's very first scene, gets riddled with bullets by a bunch of bad-dies. Alas, they miss all of O.J.'s vital organs and O.J. spends most of the film in a hospital bed. Does the scene where O.J. gets ventilated suggest that Simpson in real life should have faced a firing squad? Leslie Nielsen plays with hilarious deadpan aplomb O.J.'s close friend and fellow cop, the awesomely inept Frank Drebin. Leslie proposes that a "blackmailer" tried to off O.J. Does this mean that O.J. in real life had a black mailer, most probably someone who's got photographic evidence of one of O.J.'s numerous infidelities? Maybe O.J. refused to pay the black mailer and he/she/it (?) killed his wife Nicole, subsequently setting Simpson up for murder?

Once again, we got ourselves a real smashing cast to back up O.J.:

to be reunited with Hillie.

O.J. appears early in the flick, as "Tucker the Truckee," a gentle, garrulous, gregarious gee-jammer. O.J.'s first lines of dialogue: "What's da matta wid you dog? Don't you know you could get killed out here?" (Actually, the dog's probably safer standing in the middle of a busy intersection than he is sitting in the cab next to O.J.) O.J. gives Hambone a lift and carries on a candid and extended conversation with the hound, shootin' the breeze with the canine as if it were his soulmate and confidant. He tells the dog he bailed from his unhappy married life when he found out that his dissatisfied wife was cheating on him! Does this in turn imply that Nicole herself cheated on O.J., thus incuring his murderously vengeful wrath?

Later, O.J. hits on some foxy chicks in a car, be yell's "Chicken alert!" when they pull up to his rig. Does this coarse remark and rude behavior suggest that O.J.'s really a - guspl - shallow sexist pig? And if this is a children's movie, what the hell is O.J. doing playing one of our society's most rugged and venerable macho icons, the truck driver? Is O.J. ultimately the victim of crippling and restrictive gender roles? Does O.J. and his screwed-up life serve as a prime example of the potential hazards found in being too much of a "man's man?"

*Hambone and Hillie* is a definite four-star bow-wow (you can go ahead and groan if you want; you have that right), one made worse by grossly misusing a handful of damn good thespians:

- \* Wiseguy comedian Jack Carter as a brutal dognapper;
- \* Alm Hale, Jr. (The Skipper on *Gilligan's Island*) as a sweet of grandpoo;
- \* Candy Clark as a pregnant woman who in the film's most gloriously tasteless scene ices some creep with a shotgun while in the throes of labor (remember, this is supposed to be a kiddie pic!);

\* *Airport* series regular **George Kennedy** as Frank Drebin's detective partner

\* *Fantasy Island*'s **Ricardo Montalban** as a rich bastard who plans on having the Queen of England assassinated during a baseball game;

\* **Priscilla Presley** as Montalban's cute babe secretary;

\* **John Houseman** as a driver's ed teacher;

\* Baseball great **Reggie Jackson** as an outfielder who's been brainwashed into killing the Queen; and

\* **Lawrence Tierney** as a crusty baseball team manager

Scary Larry Tierney in real life went to jail for awhile after he lusted and got stabbed in a bar fight in '73 (Larry was 54 years old at the time). Did Lawrence give O.J. any pointers on how to persevere in the pokey? Probably not, judging from poor little O.J.'s candy-ass comments about needing a special pillow in order to get to sleep during his incarceration. Now, is O.J. a sniveling spoiled little baby wuss or what? You know my answer for this one.

And does the casting of fellow all-American black jock Reggie Jackson as a crazed robotic killer eerily reflect O.J.'s own incipient bloodlust and psychosis?

## **No Place to Hide (1991)**

The next O.J. flick is a definite anomaly: it's a damn fine film, a corker, a beaut, a real peach and a half. Naturally, it flopped at the box office and got dumped on video without much fanfare. The film in question is *No Place to Hide*, a crackerjack murder mystery thriller. It's about a snotty little girl (appealingly played by that consummate showbiz trooper Drew Barrymore) who's put in the protective custody of a hard-bitten homicide detective (a suitably rough-around-the-edges performance by Kris Kristofferson) after her sister gets brutally knifed.

*No Place to Hide* is a real on-the-money movie. The tense, confident direction by Richard Danus keeps things on suspenseful track from start to finish. Better still, the incredibly prolific and forever underrated seasoned B-pic composer Robert O. Ragland supplies a solid, bluesy score. The cast all turn in top-notch performances, with particularly bang-up supporting turns by Dey Young as Kristofferson's loyal partner and the ever-reliable Martin Landau as a crusty police captain. Veteran character actress Lilyan Chauvin and Kane Hodder (Jason in the last few *Friday the 13th* films) have small roles as a nun and a drunken hit-and-run driver, respectively.

And O.J., surprisingly, acquits himself

quite well as Allie Wheeler, a cheerful crippled ex-football player whom Kristofferson has look after Barrymore while he's investigating the case. *No Place to Hide* showcases O.J.'s best film performance to date: he's natural, relaxed, and even engaging. Granted, O.J. doesn't give what one would consider to be a truly fantastic performance, but the Juice does for once manage to seem like an authentic, flesh and blood, likeable person - and that alone is a remarkable feat. The fact that the role is a rather small one doesn't hurt matters either.

Further, *No Place to Hide* is the last movie where O.J. gets creamed. And boy is O.J.'s death scene in this one a real lulu. O.J. and Drew are alone in a house. Some bad dude comes flying through the window; O.J. makes hash out of the creep by knocking him upside the head with a sledgehammer. Another jerk runs through the door. O.J. throws himself out of his wheelchair and onto the guy. Both go crashing to the floor. O.J. knocks out this sucker with the sledge. A third sumbitch comes through the door; this bastard shoots O.J. once in the back. O.J. trips the guy, and they start to struggle on the floor. O.J. tells Drew to make a break for safety. Drew books. The baddie sticks a gun under O.J.'s chin and pulls the trigger. And that's all she wrote, gang.

And now it's time for a little utterly nonsensical analysis of *No Place to Hide*. The killer in the flick turns out to be Landau, a disillusioned cop who believes the only way justice can be truly served is if the police hunt down the scum of the earth and kill them themselves instead of letting the criminals go to court and possibly walk. (Gee, I wonder if this in any way directly corresponds with the ultimate verdict passed in the murder trial, in which Mr. Simpson was deemed not guilty on any of the charges?) Did this aberrant fruitcake in some way predict the grotesque farce the O.J. trial eventually became, with the cops being accused of setting up the Juice? Is Landau the representation of Mark Furman and the L.A. police force? Does the concept of "justice" still even exist in America? (I personally think not, primarily because O.J. is still walking free among us.)

## **The Naked Gun 2 1/2 (1991)**

Because *The Naked Gun* was such a big hit, a more-of-the-wacky-same sequel naturally followed, called *The Naked Gun 2 1/2: The Smell of Fear!* The story concerns a bunch of evil industrialists who plan to overthrow the president's new energy policy.

The cast once again is real primo: Besides the gang from the first one

(Nielsen, Kennedy, Presley, et al), we also have:

\* Robert Goulet as one of the evil industrialists;

\* Richard Griffiths as a crippled scientist;

\* Notorious cop slapper Zsa Zsa Gabor as her own bad self (interestingly, Zsa Zsa was found guilty as charged while O.J. managed to walk; maybe O.J. picked up a few pointers from Zsa Zsa on how to neatly work your way through the justice system?); and

\* Anthony James as a crazed killer who attempts to bag Presley while she's taking a shower.

As usual, O.J. suffers a few gross indignities here. Nordberg at one point is dragged under a van during a madcap chase. O.J. races down a hill; an umbrella and a road cone hit him right in the nads. (Ouch!) O.J. is then swept away by a Greyhound bus and has his sorry black ass dragged all over Washington state. Is this a heart-rendingly blatant example of how O.J. is always being figuratively run down by the ubiquitous and indefatigable "the Man," who never seems to give O.J. a single break? The crushing pressure of always being in the public spotlight? A tasteless, sickening, and disturbing example of pandering to the most base and cutthroat whims of a perpetually violence hungry nation? At another point O.J. finds himself hanging from a telephone pole. Is this a



gram confirmation of how O.J.'s fate precariously hung in the balance during the murder trial. Lastly, towards the end of this flick O.J. blows a huge hole in a wall with an enormous gun. Is this oversized firearm a maleficent extension of O.J.'s penis? Does O.J.'s unceasing hostility stem from the fact that his equipment is, to put it delicately, somewhat lacking? Am I being too mock-Freudian here?



### Cia Code Name: Alexa (1992)

O.J. made a highly lamentable return to his early bad action film roots by taking an obnoxiously meaty supporting role in the stupidously clunky direct-to-video abortion *Cia Code Name: Alexa*. O.J. plays Murphy, a rugged, no-bullshit homicide detective. He gets involved with oh-so-cool-and-hunky CIA hotshot (the singularly uncharismatic pretty-boy action star Lorenzo Lamas, er, Lamas). O.J. and Lamas arrest hot terrorist babe Alexa (the gorgeous, but more-wooden-than-a-giant-red-wood Kathleen Kimmont). O.J. makes a fruitless attempt to get Kimmont to drop a dime on corrupt rich asshole Victor Mahler (astrotically overplayed by onetime *Airwolf* series regular Alex Cord, who sports an unconvincing German accent). When O.J. fails to get Kimmont to spill the beans on Mahler, his partner wisecracks: "Maybe we should beat it out of her." O.J.'s scary reply: "Oh, wouldn't I love to." Creepier still, O.J. growls directly to Kimmont's face: "But you would probably like it." I wonder if O.J. used those exact same lines on Nicole?

*Cia Code Name: Alexa* features O.J. at his all-time worst, which is really saying a mouthful when one considers that almost all of O.J.'s performances are pretty substandard. O.J. lets it all hang out in this ungodly bilge. He goes to a bar, has a brewski, says the words "fuck" and "shit," and almost strangles a cop who blames O.J. for his partner's death. O.J. kills a dude by frying the guy's head with defibrillator paddles (!). O.J. comments about a reverend who gets wacked: "I have a priest with enough lead in him he could sink a ship." And O.J. jokes to his soon-to-be-dead partner about a dream he had about bumpin' his partner's mamal lck!!! As one can properly deduce from all these quintessentially dreadful O.J. moments, *Cia Code Name: Alexa* is one exceptionally deplorable piece of celluloid detritus. In other words, hardcore direct-to-video junkies should find this stinky turd to be a masochistic delight. All others are duly warned.

Now, it's once again question time. Does the casting of O.J. as a cop in any way foretell the Juice's real-life trouble with John Law? Does O.J.'s constant bad jokes about "kinky" stuff in any way suggest that O.J.'s into some deviant sexual practices? Does O.J. calling Kimmont "bitch" and claiming that she would like it if he beat her represent O.J.'s alleged violent streak, his uncontrollably seething rage towards women? Is O.J. an abusive misogynist? Or a misunderstood, truly gentle and harmless soul? Am I a cynical, mordant, flagrantly irreverent wise-ass? Or an earnest, diligent, intense seeker of the - dare I say it - truth? (I'm sure readers will send letters claiming that I'm either one or the other. Or perhaps a combination of the two?) Is Lorenzo Lamas really lame? Or am I being much too hard on the charmless but nevertheless prolific no-talent? Am I ever gonna pose a genuinely relevant, intelligent, or provocative question?

### The Naked Gun 3 1/3 (1994)

O.J.'s final film to date is the third *Naked Gun* opus *The Naked Gun 3 1/3: The Final Insult*. This one concerns terrorist Fred Ward, who plans on blowing up the Academy Awards ceremony. Leslie Nielsen, George Kennedy, and O.J. set out to stop them. My question is this: Why in the hell do they even bother? I mean, the Oscars are overrated, boring hype to begin with. And the ceremony is invariably draggy, smug, and unmemorable. Come to think of it, so was the grudgingly dull and protracted murder trial. Maybe someone strapped with grenades, dynamite, and other deadly explosives should have run into the courthouse while the trial was in full swing and blown everyone to hell.

The cast for this one is really something else:

\* Supermodel Anna Nicole Smith as Ward's girlfriend (since Anna is a hot young blonde, she can be perceived as the Nicole Simpson

surrogate in this movie);

\* Kathleen Freeman as Ward's shrewish mom;

\* R. Lee Ermy as a prison guard;

\* Randall "Tex" Cobb as a prison inmate who tries to rape Leslie Nielsen in the shower;

\* Tacky camp goddess Pia Zadora, who gets to sing and dance at the Oscar ceremony;

\* Raquel Welch (as herself)

\* James Earl Jones (as himself);

\* "Weird" Al Yankovic (who's, alas, in all three *Naked Gun* movies)

\* Ann B. Davis (yep, the maid from *The Brady Bunch*); and

\* Julie Strain as a dominatrix.

Well, it's time for the final round of questions. (Please don't cry all at once.) Okay, here it goes. In the flick there's a '70s flashback to a disco club shooting: O.J. sports a massive, hideously overpowered Afro. Is the absurdly immense 'fro representative of O.J.'s equally prodigious ego? Or is it just a mere example of downright pitiful taste in wouldn't be stylish coiffures? And for awhile in the flick, Leslie Nielsen's old lady dumps him; O.J. recommends to Leslie that he get Dr. Kevorkian's phone number. Is this yet another unarguable affirmation of O.J.'s murderous tendencies? Is Jack the Wack an old-time buddy of O.J.'s? Was that trip to Chicago to see Jack?

Let's sum this baby up. Did O.J. really kill Nicole Brown Simpson or Ron Goldman? Damned if I, or anyone else, will ever really know. Has The Man always been comin' down hard on O.J. and his people? Well, not much anymore, but it's an ancient chicken-egg excuse that'll never go away thanks to affirmative action and multiculturalism. What's the one key thing we can all be certain about from this article? One thing: I'll never watch another lousy O.J. Simpson movie for as long as I live!

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more warmly than the actors - and they did!

There's a scene in the movie where I'm lying on a gurney in the ice room with ice packed all around me. There was a blanket over me, and then a big heavy rubber sheet, and then piles of ice - the real stuff - on top of me. I was supposed to be almost dead, but my breath was showing, my warm breath in this cold air. So they tucked a little rubber tube in my mouth, the off-camera side of my face, which was my left side, and the tube hung out of the left side of my mouth and I could breathe through that. Then it was perfect, because I could look almost dead. Of course I had to hold whatever breath I had anyway, so that the ice that was piled on top of me wouldn't shift. I had to be very careful about that! There were lots of fun little, interesting things like that.

My "love interest" in the movie was Roger Pryor. I guess he couldn't make me out. One day when my mother was hanging around on the set some place, I was inside my little trailer alone and he entered, grabbed me and kissed me [laughs]! It sort of startled me! When I looked at him in a kind of a surprised way, he kind of stood back and looked at me in a surprised way. Then he turned and left, and that was it!

**TW:** How old were you in 1940 when you made that movie?

JS: I have no idea. I don't put things in terms of years, I don't pin things down in years. People ask me how old I am and I don't know. And when people ask me how old my children are, I say, "I really don't know. That's their problem!" Who am I to go around speculating about these things [laughs]? I've got other things to think about!

*The Man With Nine Lives* was, I think, my biggest role in a movie, that and *The Light of Western Stars* [a 1940 Western]. After *Man With Nine Lives* I was signed to do a movie at RKO called *Sunny* [1941], but I had a little time off in between and I wanted to go back to Seattle 'cause I hadn't been home for ages. I went, and of course had a great time, with all my friends and whatnot. And when I found out that my aunt was going to New York, I thought,

"Oh, what fun. I'd love to go too." I had time, so I went to New York with

her...and absolutely fell in love with New York. In fact, after she went home, I stayed, because I had a little time before *Sunny* started. MGM looked after me there, by the way [even though she was no longer working for MGM]. Billy Grady was the head of talent at MGM in Hollywood and he had always championed me and was very sweet. So somebody from MGM's New York office was assigned to me and he was on my tail all the time, which was really nice because I didn't know anybody or anything.

While I was in New York, I was put in touch with people, including Marc Connelly the playwright. Marc Connelly asked me to dinner, and then he called [Broadway producer] Max Gordon and set up an appointment for me to go over to Max's office and meet him - Max was about to do a new play. I had another, oh, two or three weeks before I had to go back to Hollywood and so, not knowing exactly what I was doing, I went. There was Max Gordon, and [writers] Jerome Chodorov and Joe Fields, and George Kaufman, and they were in the process of casting this new play. They kind of looked at me - I didn't know what they were looking for - and somebody said, "Well, how 'bout the Eileen part?" They talked awhile, and they asked me what I'd done before on stage. (That was important - they kind of looked down on people who'd been in movies as having not very much know-how on the stage. I'd had quite a bit, and of course I made up a few things too [laughs]!) Finally they said "thank you" and so forth and I left.

It was getting on toward Christmas, and I really wanted to go home to Seattle for Christmas, I had never in my life been away from home at Christmas time. Finally I got a call to come to the theater, and every ingenue in the countryside was there! I went out onto the stage and there I was, under this work light, with all these voices out there in the black. I didn't know whose voice was whose, but we chatted and whatnot. And that was that. I sat around again for a while, finally got called back and there were ten girls there. We read scenes and so forth. In a week or so I was called back again and there were two of us, and we read again. (I'll never forget - there was this darling

old guy on the curtain, he'd been there who knows how long, and he would say, "Now, don't be nervous!") I was staying at the Barbizon Plaza on 58th Street, and a short time later, when I came into my room, there was a telegram tucked under the door that said, REPORT FOR REHEARSAL MONDAY MORNING. And that's how I knew I got the part of Eileen in *My Sister Eileen* with Shirley Booth [one of the big Broadway smash hits of the 1940s].

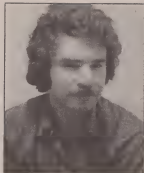
I immediately made some calls and said, "You've got to cancel my movie contract [for *Sunny*]. I don't really want to do it, I want to stay here. Cancel it before they know what I'm up to!" Somehow they were able to do that for me. And then I just had a wonderful time in *My Sister Eileen*. We opened in New York on the 26th of December 1940. Shortly before opening night, Max Gordon came up to me: "You had better be good," he said, "or I'll annihilate you!" [Laughs] That was exactly what he said! I guess that was his way of telling me that he had really put in a strong word for me or something. He had been my champion, and he was very sweet.

I left the play after a year and a half to get married. The play sort of dwindled on, and then Shirley Booth wanted to do something else. Also, there were so many young men in it who were being drafted constantly, and the producers had already gotten their money out of it anyway, so it finally closed. I only acted a little after I married - a little radio, TV, summer theater.

I have a happy life today. I ballroom dance, which I love, I've competed a couple of times and I showcase twice a year. I have a very busy, happy life. And I still get fan letters every now and then, and I can't believe it. I even got a telephone call from a fan in Wales - amazing! So many of these people say what big fans of the old movies they are. Which I can understand. When I look at old movies on television, I must say, the dialogue is so much better, the directing is better, there's no hi-tech action junk that is just distracting.

I enjoy some of the old movies myself.

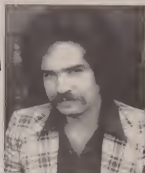




# I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE

## The Cinematic Legacy of

# JERRY GROSS



by Joe Wawrzyniak

**I**n 1964 producer, director, and distributor Jerry Gross entered into the exploitation movie fore with the grimy grindhouse item *Flee Girls Ltd.* The Queens, New York native and his partner Nick Demetroules immediately followed this modest start with the gritty black and white race hate potboiler *Girl on a Chainang*, which although set in the Deep South was actually filmed in two weeks in Long Island. Next up for the dynamic trash picture duo was *Teenage Mother*, which boasted comic Fred Willard in his film debut and climaxed with startling footage of a woman giving birth that Jerry bought from a hospital for \$50. Jerry's wife, Arlene Sue Farber, starred in both *Girl on a Chainang* and *Teenage Mother*. She later had a small role in *The French Connection*.

It was in 1968 with the formation of Cinematic Industries that Gross began his tremendously successful run of releasing low-budget horror and exploitation features on the East Coast, making a substantial financial killing providing lots of lowdown trashy fare for the sleaze-happy audiences who regularly watched such gritty affairs in New York's legendarily seamy 42nd Street grindhouse theaters.

Gross quickly made a name for himself by refusing to kowtow to the MPAA, boldly releasing X-rated features that raised the ire of the ratings board, but naturally reaped plentiful profits at drive-ins and grindhouses across the country. For instance, when the MPAA refused to give Melvin Van Peeble's seminal blaxploitation trailblazer *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* an R rating, Gross promoted it as being "Rated X by an all-white jury" and

laughed all the way to the bank. The incendiary flick went over big with black, urban ghetto audiences and played a key role in inaugurating the enormously profitable '70s blaxploitation movie craze.

Another major money-maker for Gross was his immensely popular and long-running

drive-in doublebilling of David Durston's unsparingly harsh gore gem *I Drink Your Blood* with the distastefully tame 'n' tame zombie cheapie *I Eat Your Skin* (advertised in posters as "2 Great Blood-Horror to Rip Out Your Guts!"). While the latter pic was an undeniable dud, Durston's film stands out as one of the finest and most rawly effective of the early '70s evil hippie horror movies, a small subgenre which also includes *Simon, King of the Witches*, *The Love-Thrill Murders*, *The Deathmaster*, and *The Night God Screamed*. Moreover, *I Drink Your Blood* was another instance where Gross audaciously defied the MPAA; although Jerry screened it for them and agreed to edit five minutes worth of hardcore explicit bloodshed in order to get an R rating, he nonetheless released the more graphic uncensored version to drive-ins and grindhouses. When the enraged MPAA found out about this, Gross told theater owners to make their own cuts to the picture, which resulted in numerous prints of *I Drink Your Blood* with varying degrees of gore in them. The third popular X-rated feature Gross released and made a pile of dough on was Ralph Bakshi's raunchy animated hoot *Fritz the Cat*.

The infamous and extremely controversial rape-revenge shocker *I Spit on Your Grave* was probably the most notorious film Gross released; it was savagely ridiculed on Siskel and Ebert's syndicated PBS show, got banned in Britain as a "video nasty," and to this very day remains a source of heated debate amongst '70s exploitation movie aficionados, who are evenly split into those who hail it as an unjustly maligned and misunderstood masterpiece and those who consider it a thoroughly disgust-



ELITE MOVIES



Above left: Gross and Peter Fonda work on the campaign for Idaho Transfer. Above right: *I Spit on Your Grave*. Right: Gross and John Huston at Cannes

ing and irredeemable piece of disgusting filth.

Lucio Fulci's hugely influential Italian splatter landmark *Zombie* was perhaps the biggest grindhouse hit for Jerry Gross in the late '70s. The marketing of *Zombie* is a shining testament to Gross' remarkable genius as a shrewd promoter. Posters for *Zombie* - with a striking photo of a hideous rot-faced ghoul and the simple tag-line "We are going to eat you!" were displayed in New York City subway tunnels a week or two prior to its release. Moreover, grindhouse patrons who caught *Zombie* during its initial theatrical run were given free burf bags, a terrifically tasteless gimmick that was previously done for *Mark of the Devil*. *Zombie's*

smash box office success revitalized Fulci's then-filtering cinematic career and firmly established him as a master maker of no-holds-barred brutal gore pictures that still continue to enjoy a fervent cult following.

Among the other American movies Gross released are the enjoyably junky exploitation winner *Shanty Town*, Durston's gut-wrenching

venerable disease stomach-turner *Stigma*, the severely warped killer kid knock-out *Devil Times Five*, James Fawcett's hard-hitting prison pic *Penitentiary*, the endearingly schlocky *Jaws* rip-off *Blood Beach* (advertised with the wickedly witty tag-line: "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water - you can't get to it"), and Ulli Lommel's creepily off-beat *The Boogey Man*. Furthermore, Jerry procured the rights for and issued a sizeable share of European films in the United States;

these foreign features include the classic shock docs *Mondo*

*Cane*, *Mondo Pazzo*

(*Mondo Cane's* sequel;

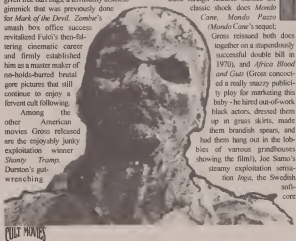
Gross reissued both docs together on a stupendously successful double bill in 1970), and *Africa Blood and Guts* (Gross concocted a really snazzy publicity ploy for marketing this baby - he hired out-of-work black actors, dressed them up in grass skirts, made them brandish spears, and had them hang out in the lobbies of various grindhouses showing the film!), Joe Samo's steamy exploitation sensation *Igo*, the Swedish soft-core



cutting *Fawcett Hall*, the torrid Spanish-Italian effort *Female Animal*, Jose Lamaz's racy debut film *Whirlpool*, and the flop British horror spoof *Son of Dracula*.

In the early '80s, Jerry Gross suddenly quit and opted out of the B-pic grindhouse feature altogether. It saddens me to think that this exploitation movie pioneer lived the last 20-odd years of his life as a recluse in total obscurity and abject poverty. Gross was barely scraping by on welfare and residing in a flophouse when he passed away. Worse yet, his body remained undiscovered for three days after he expired. Considering the impressive breadth and significance of his cinematic legacy, one can safely claim that Jerry Gross deserved a much better send-off than the grim one he got when he died at the young age of 62.

Left: The title creature of Lucio Fulci's *Zombie*



# Jerry Gross Remembered

by Sam Sherman  
writer/producer  
*Five Bloody Graves*  
*Satan's Sadists*  
*Naughty Stewardesses*

I first met Jerry Gross in New York when I was in my early 20s back in the 1960s.

A mutual friend, famous screenwriter/director Doran William "Bill" Cannon, brought us together because he felt we were kindred spirits. At the time I was greatly impressed by the progress Jerry had made as an independent filmmaker and his own theatrical distributor. I explained that I was trying to do the same thing and he encouraged me, saying, "You can do it too."

We shared interests in old movies, the history of the film industry and the "independent" world of film distribution. Jerry had already known of me as he used to read the national magazines I wrote for. I stayed in touch with Jerry over the years as my career advanced and as his certainly did. From a tiny one-room office he grew to create the public company Crenation Industries with large sumptuous offices at the MGM building in New York and ten sales exchanges of his own from coast to coast.

We would get together from time to time or talk on the phone. I kept a watch on what his company was doing, and he kept a watch on my company, Independent-International Pictures Corp. My wife and I were at the Show-A-Rama Exhibitors convention in Kansas City when Jerry was there with his full entourage and sponsored a major luncheon there. He did a presentation equivalent to what a major studio was doing then with a fine preview screening and also a talk he gave along with his celebrity guests.

Eventually Jerry was to distribute a film I made, *The Dynamite Brothers*, and we spent time together on that project. When Jerry moved to L.A., I saw him less, but we would talk by phone, and I did get together with him in L.A., serving to get him back in touch with our mutual friend Bill Cannon.

Jerry was not only a genius in the film industry but also a fun guy. He could have taken over a major studio and run it far better than those who do.

Later on, when Jerry dropped from sight, I started looking for him, as I wanted to get in touch and have us do some project together. My cam-

I will always remember his great achievements, his friendship and his being a fellow member of our group of "younger old-timers" in the business. Jerry has gone to a better place, where there are no under-reported film grosses and no major studio competitors, who have any better status or clout. All people are equal there.

I am glad to have known Jerry Gross. He was an "original" and someone who helped inspire my own career.

by Doran William Cannon  
writer  
*Hex, Skidoo*  
*Brewster McCloud*

I think I am the first of us to have met Jerry Gross when he weighed 300 lbs. Well, he only looked that heavy because he was wearing his uncle's



huge suit, and evidently he had worn his uncle's suit when he, Jerry, actually did weigh 300 lbs., like his uncle in the Bronx. Losing about 150 pounds of baby fat was the first evidence of his tremendous will. The will to succeed was that much stronger than the lack of will required to just hang out in the Bronx with his parents, a life I think he denied since he was 12, determined to become a major movie mogul. In the sanctity of his childhood bedroom, he kept files on distribution patterns and movie moguls and famous sto-

film. Pamphlets were given out to the moviegoers with each ticket sold, describing no doubt the dangers of syphilis and gonorrhea, as such was the basics of sex education in those days.

I met Jerry in 1962 or '63. I think he came to a party I gave, maybe he had heard that I'd made a film, not sure now. But, he would have been about 22 and he was already plotting his first secret film venture. Wearing that huge suit and a moustache, he was doing his best to look 40 years old. He was the only person I ever knew who was as fascinated with film distribution as I was with making movies.

I introduced him to Arlene Farber, whose picture I had for casting. I just gave him the picture I think...and he made her his best friend for life. I also made a point of introducing Jerry to Sam Sherman. Sam loved the guy for a lifetime, as we all have. After I moved to California, I didn't see him for several years till Sam reintroduced us.

Everyone loved Jerry for his genius and his heart. I've lost only one other close friend from way back then. That was in 1982. And I lost my brother Joe in 1980. You can count the big ones on one hand, and somehow Jerry is one of those to me.

Ultimately, his genius and his big heart did him in. Jerry died of a lonely heart, yet he embraced that lonely heart. We, who fear our lonely heart can take solace in Jerry's courage. Jerry and I never failed to hug when we saw each other. That was Jerry. G'bye ol' bud.

by Arlene Farber  
actress  
*I Drink Your Blood*  
*Girl on a Chain Gang*  
*The French Connection*

I knew Jerry Gross for over 30 years. He was an extraordinary person. He had a photographic memory and was a walking encyclopedia on film, sports, the stock market, and most any subject you could name. His sense of humor was legendary - bizarre and irreverent. He was bold and fearless in his film and advertising choices, and single-handedly created a market for black action films that was previously non-existent. No subject for Jerry was taboo. The more controversial, outrageous, silly, socially unacceptable, the better. He didn't worry about the conventions of society. He just knew what people wanted to see.

At 23 years old, Jerry decided that to raise money from investors, he needed to be fat. So he ate his way up to 250 pounds. His goal was to look like a 40-year-old businessman. He grew a moustache, wore cheap, conservative suits with very thin black ties and matching Brown Buster shoes. To me, he looked like an overweight FBI agent.

Jerry, along with his partner Nick Demitroff, set out to raise money for their film. Jerry went to his well-off aunt and managed to get

**"He single-handedly created a market for black action films."**

party still distributes four of the films he either made or released theatrically. I tried unsuccessfully for five years to locate him, and/or his friend Arlene Farber, only to have the search end in late 2002, when a friend sent me Jerry's obituary from *Weekly Mirror*. It was a great shock to me.

ries of how independent films were marketed.

He once sought out and met, I recall, Kroger Bobb, the man who had distributed the movie *Mom and Dad*, allowed to bypass local decency laws under the sham of being a sex education



her (as he would put it) "To cough up some dough."

Next, they would put an ad in the *New York Times* classified section. It was answered by one Jess Wolf, a manufacturer who shelled out a big chunk of the money they needed. In exchange, Jerry and Nick made him treasurer of the yet-to-be-formed film company. Businessman Henry Kaplan came in for the rest for the privilege of doing a bit part and a small percentage of the profits. Jerry and Nick were on their way. They had managed to raise a grand total of \$37,000 dollars.

I met Jerry when I auditioned for this first film. I went up to an office that had the word "shipping" on the door. Ya see, to earn money Jerry worked for this shipping company loading trucks by day. After hours, he and his partner Nick sneaked into the company office and used it to interview actors and later to rehearse them. When I first laid eyes on him, I thought Jerry was strange. He just kind of meandered around seeming not to pay much attention. His partner Nick did all the talking. During my interview and audition, Jerry didn't utter one word. Yet it was Jerry who insisted that I play the small part of Nellie. Nick wanted actress Louisa Moritz to do it. But Jerry's mind was made up, and once that happened, there was no changing it.

During filming, Jerry directed by mostly talking to the cameraman and consulting his storyboards. Although he communicated a lot with lead actor Bill Watson and myself off

camera, when it came to direct, all communication stopped. It was just action, cut, talking to the cameraman and going over his storyboards. In spite of this terse style of directing, he chose good actors and managed to put together an exceptional film for his \$37,000 dollars. But what was even more exceptional was his marketing abilities.

The film was about some students who go down south to register black voters and get arrested in a small redneck southern town (actually Long Island) for simply having the nerve to be a white woman and a white man driving with a black man. The girl ends up on a chain gang. To publicize this film, Jerry hired actors to dress up as redneck

sheriffs, had them holding barking German Shepherd dogs and gave away thousands of

years, his friends felt free to call him at any god-forsaken hour. He was always there to listen. He was also always there to encourage and inspire. He was a muse to many an artist, including myself. He always made us feel like we were God's gift to the world. He would always encourage us to try things we've never tried before.

Jerry was not only generous with his time but would also give you his last dime if he thought you needed it. He never worried about money or possessions. He always had confidence in his ability to make more. Jerry truly had the heart and soul of an entrepreneur.

I also knew Jerry as a wonderful writer. At one point we started to write a book together based on his life. Here is a tiny excerpt and peek into his life. The piece starts with a nine-year-old - that's Jerry - writing a letter to Republic Pictures:

Dear Republic Pictures:  
I am the manager of Loew's 175th Street Theater. The mail sometimes gets lost so please send me the following to my home address, listed above:  
I preschool of *Don Daredevil Meets Atom Man* (your serial in 12 chapters)  
I set 8"x10" action stills from each chapter  
I 6"x4" lobby standing display of 'DON DAREDEVIL AND HIS HORSE BUSTER'

[This is how Jerry got his start in the film business. Well, actually, a year earlier at the age of eight he stole the big letter "M" after a man

## "He could have taken over a major studio and run it far better than those who do."

chain gang bracelets to theatergoers. He also created some great one sheets and classic radio and print ads. The film was a great success and all the investors did well. Not only that, but the owner of a large theater chain - Marshall Naffley - with Jerry's prodding, took note. He decided to get in on the action and gave Jerry close to a hundred thousand dollars to produce his next feature.

There's, of course, much more to Jerry's career, and I could probably go on for hours. But wait! I don't want to forget to mention are the qualities that made me and many other people love Jerry Gross.

Many years ago, when I was in my 20s, I was upset about something. It was 3 a.m., and I wanted to talk. I called Jerry and immediately apologized. What was I thinking, I asked if I had woken him up. He sounded really groggy but he said, "No, I'm up." In fact, you could call Jerry any time during the night and he would say the same thing, "No, I'm up." He wanted people to think he never slept. And because he maintained this fiction over the

changing the marquee of the uptown theater had left it unattended at the base of the ladder.

Jerry had a deep capacity to love and admire the people closest to him unconditionally. And how was able to make them know that was the case.

As for me, no one in the world has ever made me feel more loved and appreciated than Jerry. I know many of his friends feel the same way. He was a funny, eccentric guy. From his Elvis Presley impressions to placing walnuts on his eyelids for a close-up portrait, he was always making me laugh and doing something that struck me as totally hysterical.

I really love him, and I miss him a lot. It's so weird not being able to call him up. But I keep thinking about how much Jerry hated change. So I'm thinking that maybe he's hanging around his body today. If you're here Jerry hope you're enjoying it. Even though I can't call you up anymore, I still have my precious funny memories of you. Wherever you are, Jerry, I hope you're hanging out with Mary and making great films.

# Jerry Gross Remembered

## RETURN OF THE BLIND DEAD

(1973/Spanish; D. Armando de Ossorio, a.k.a. *Return of the Evil Dead* and *Attack of the Blind Dead*)

The first of three sequels to the popular *Tombs of the Blind Dead*, this is one of those rare follow-ups that's actually a good deal better than the original pie. While the initial feature has its moments (the climactic train massacre sequence is an absolute gut-wrenching tour-de-force of heart-stopping horror) and plenty of creepy atmosphere to spare, it suffers from a heavy-going lethargy that prevents it from being an all-time classic. On the other hand, this film has almost no dreary lulls to speak of, substantially benefiting from a tightly wound plot, a quick, snappy pace, more dynamic direction, and an invigorating sense of rip-snorting vitality noticeably lacking in the previous movie.

This time the murderous cannibalistic Knights Templar, a dastardly group of Devil-worshipping monks who drink human blood to gain immortality, are resurrected 500 years after they were slaughtered by the townspeople of a small Portuguese hamlet so they can butcher the ances-

and the supernatural monsters that lurk all around us unnoticed by society at large naturally lend themselves to a multi-storied omnibus fright film format. Well, this trio of truly terrifying tales does the master full justice, combining both supremely sepulchral midnight-in-the-graveyard moodiness and jump-out-at-you startling shocks with often truly frightening results.

First yarn, "The Drowned" - wealthy Bruce Payne inherits a crumbling old seaside hotel that unbeknownst to Payne has a foul carnivorous demon residing in the murky basement. Directed with exceptional style and grace by Christophe Gans, this especially chilling humdinger is highlighted by Richard Lynch's touching turn as a bitter old man who renounces his faith in God after his wife and child perish in a shipwreck in direct to video erotic thriller perennial Maria Ford's eerie, ethereal, and even strangely sexy cameo as Payne's dead girlfriend who's resurrected from a watery grave as a ghostly, pallid, mossy-haired zombie.

Second vignette, "The Cold" - Sweet young runaway Bess Myer rents a room at a shabby apartment with a lonely, reclusive scientist (mov-

around narrative starring Lovecraft movie vet Jeffrey Combs perfectly cast as the author himself, who visits a secret library to check out the legendary name of evil Necronomicon and damn nearly gets killed in the process. Barely recognizable under heavy make-up which makes him resemble a gaunt Bruce Campbell, Combs simply shines in a role he was seemingly destined to portray. Moreover, the uniformly superb special effects by dependable artists Tom Savini, Todd Masters, and Screaming Mad George are as ghastly as they ought to be, the splatter is likewise properly revolting and plentiful, the tone suitably creepy throughout, and the individual stories ultimately cohere into a provocative and penetrating meditation on man's tenuous hold on reality, exposing a scary underworld that if intruded on by us stupidly inquisitive mortals can prove to be quite deadly. A superior horror anthology.

*Reviewed by Scary Joe Mawczyniak*

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tors of their killers during an annual gala bi-centennial festival. With their hideous skull-like faces, hollow eye sockets, and filthy flowing white robes, the Knights qualify as genuinely scary and unnerving supernatural zombie menaces. The various attack scenes are executed with a truly rousing panache; the fight between the townspeople and the Knights Templar in the village square is particularly thrilling. There's even some nice touches of irony sprinkled throughout, with the ultimate dismal fates of the contemptibly craven no-account mayor (excellently played with hammy élan by rotund Italian spaghetti Western perennial Fernando Sanchez) and the crippled local deli being especially spot-on. The film earns bonus points for its grimly serious take-no-prisoners tone: A little girl who's put in considerable jeopardy loses both her parents to the unrelenting Knights Templar. And those strikingly ghostly slow motion shots of the Knights Templar riding their horses across the desolate countryside possess an amazingly eerie poetic quality. So, if you only see one *Blind Dead* outing in your lifetime, make sure it's this pleasingly lively and on-the-money entry. *Reviewed by Joe Mawczyniak*

## NECRONOMICON

(1993; D. Brian Yuzna, Christophe Gans and Shu Kameko a.k.a. *H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon*)  
Lovecraft's gloomy short stories about obsession

ingly played by David Warner) residing on the weirdly freezing top floor. When Myer befriends the sad, fragile Warner, she learns that he has discovered the secret of immortality, which comes at a terrible price: Warner can only remain alive by fresh constant injections of human spinal fluid! Director Shu Kameko milks considerable poignancy from this haunting parable about the horrible price one must pay for cheating fate, coaxing fine supporting performances from Millie Perkins as Warner's protective landlady, Gary Graham as Myer's abusive, incestuous brute stepfather, and Dennis Christopher as a foolishly smuggy newspaper reporter.

Third and most gruesome anecdote is "Whispers." Gang-bro female cop Siggy Coleman and her sensible partner Obba Babatundé stumble on the dark, dank, forbidding underground lair of some ancient subterranean monsters with an appetite for bone marrow. Brian Yuzna eschews the spooky atmospherics of the previous segments for a graphically visceral approach that's crudely effective in a gory, mondo degusto, gross you out hideous sort of way. *Return of the Living Dead's* Don Coscarelli and Judith Drake are wonderfully quirky as the nutty old couple guardians of the savage flesh-eating beasts who need new victims to keep their race thriving for all eternity.

All these stories in and of themselves certainly smoke, as does the thankfully solid wrap-



## INCUBUS (1965)

This unusual feature confirms that William Shatner is one of the most entertaining actors alive today. Here he portrays a man pursued by a succubus who has fallen in love with him. She's supposed to lead him astray, away from his innocent goodness, but she's torn between her unexpected feelings of love and her duty. The demons kill the sister he is living with and eventually bring forth the incubus, a male demon, for Shatner to battle. Of course he eventually wins, with good triumphing over evil. All the actors deliver dialogue in the artificial language of Esperanto, and the film is subtitled in English.

*Reviewed by Kevin Lundenmash*

## BEYOND DARKNESS (1992)

This Poltergeist-influenced ghosthouse possession story features a lot of familiar looking TV commercial actors. The director of photography also went a little nuts with the fog machine... every "scary" scene has that haze and those diffused lights. In fact, it's downright hard to see those evil devil worshippers from beyond death. The rest of the story in that a reverend moves into a house with his wife and two children, and soon an evil presence makes itself known. When he tells his church about it they don't seem too surprised. Ultimately, it's up to another preacher to help banish the evil. Very familiar territory.

*Reviewed by Kevin Lundenmash*



## HELLRAISER: HELLSEEKER (2002)

Although I spent the first half hour of this movie wondering why this was a *Hellraiser* movie (it seemed more like *Amélie* *Expéditions 21*), it picked up in the 2nd act, particularly when Kristy's connection falls into place. In the intervening years since *Hellraiser 2* she had gotten married, but the man she married, but the man she married turns out to be a bit too much like her father... I won't give away the satisfactory twist ending but it more than makes up for *Hellraiser 3* and 4.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindermuth

## HALLOWEEN: RESSURRECTION (2002)

This direct sequel to 1998's *Halloween H20: 20 Years Later* is a decent installment in the *Halloween* franchise, actually killing off the Jamie Lee Curtis character in the first five minutes! Michael Meyers has returned home, literally, living beneath the suburban house where it all started (this explains where he was living for those twenty years between *Halloween 2* and *H20*). But an internet company gets the idea to broadcast a live web event of a group of college kids staying overnight in the Meyers house. Each is equipped with a small camera so everything they see is recorded. But during the broadcast Michael starts killing them, one by one. They think it's just someone in the Michael Meyers mask, little realizing it's actually the real thing. Sure, the movie had its *Blair Witch* moments with the whole video idea, but there were some genuinely creepy moments and the movie restored Michael as an entity to be feared. I was really surprised this movie didn't suck.

Reviewed by Kevin Lindermuth

## THE RING (2002)

This is up there with *Final Destination* and *Spinal Tap* as one of the best horror movies of 2002, proof that a remake can actually be done right.

When her cousin dies under mysterious circumstances, a female reporter (Naomi Watts) investigates her death. She learns not only did her

cousin die, but three of her friends died the same night at the same time. It seems they all watched a cursed videotape a week before, and that's what killed them. Curious (but in no way believing the tape caused their deaths), she watches it

and is unnerved. And as each day goes by, her apprehension and fear grow. It's basically a race against time to find out why people are dying seven days after viewing the tape. And the answers are pretty interesting. This version is a bit more complex than the original Japanese version. It's also much more creepy. - Kevin Lindermuth

## SPEEDTRAP (1977; D. Earl Bellamy)

Scruffy, nonconformist loose cannon private eye Pete Novak (barfy, bullfrog-faced '70's action movie icon Joe Don Baker at his most breezy and ingratiating) and saucy, spirited rookie police lady Nilly Nolan (played to part'n' perfection by Tyne Daly, who tackled a similar role in *The Enforcer* and eventually found grater fame as a gutsy, feminist-minded detective on *Cogney and Lacey*) join forces to capture an evasive, enigmatic high-tech car thief known as the Road Runner, a crafty, crackjack driver with a taste for fincy expensive autos.

This witty, lively, easygoing, tongue-in-cheek and cops'n'crooks thriller qualifies as first-rate '70's drive-in fun at it's unpretentious, to-the-point best. Director Bellamy keeps the character-

izations and plot exposition to an absolute minimum, placing a marked emphasis on frequent thrilling outbursts of furious excitement: blazing shoot-outs, knock-down fist fights, and more tire-squealing car chases than you can shake an oily dipstick at. Dennis Dailoff's slick cinematography also delivers the goods, notably some tasty freeze frames and spiffy use of heart-racing slow motion. The lowdown funky, heavy on the brassy horns and wicked-ass wah-wah guitar score by Anthony Harris hits a blistering groove, further aided by several soulful songs that sporadically blare away on the soundtrack. No fooling with the top-drawer supporting cast, either: Robert Loggia in his sole '70s B-

## PYTHON (2000; D. Richard Clabaugh)

*Anaconda*'s considerable box office success has in turn not surprisingly inspired a rash of derivative, yet still quite enjoyable direct-to-video cash-in copies. These rip-offs include the none to shabby *Kang Cobra*, the exceptionally fine and intelligent *Komodo*, and this seamy little oversized mutant killer snake outing. Once again an unscrupulously ambitious scientist (former Freddy Krueger Robert Englund in a neatly quirky and understated portrayal) has created one heluva fast, deadly, impossible to destroy genetically enhanced piggistic people-eating bugger, a vicious python which escapes from its cage and goes on a mankind-needing spree in a tiny jerk-water hamlet. It's up to cocky neurod special division government secret agent Parker (sternly played by tight-lipped late-night cable fare topline Casper Van Dien) to eradicate the bloodthirsty beast before things get too out of hand.

Proficiently directed by Richard Clabaugh, with slick photography by Patrick Rousseau, an effectively spare and moody ham'n'briver score by Daniel J. Nelson, and across-the-board excellent acting from a uniformly solid cast, *Python* transcends the hackneyed plot by virtue of its uncommonly sturdy execution alone. The genuinely bright script by Chris Neil, Paul J.M. Bogh, and Gary Hershberger has fun playing around with the standard fright film conventions,

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Naomi Watts in *The Ring*

with the saucy lesbian variant on the inevitable have-sex-and-die horny couple cliché being an especially clever touch. Better still, the unusually well drawn and plausible characters are firmly grounded in certain gritty everyday blue collar reality, the top-notch CGI special effects are impressively fluid and detailed, and the picture commendably takes its time carefully setting up a spooky tone in the opening first act before cutting loose with an increasingly jelling series of lethal lizard attack scenes. Sexy Jenny McCarthy vamps it up delightfully as the shameless town tramp. A barely recognizable Will Wheaton is likeable as a scruffy slacker dude. And veteran character thesp Ed Lauter has a rufy unbilled bit as an ill-fated army airplane pilot. Compact and smartly realized, *Pythons* sizes up as a pleasingly up-to-par creature feature.

Reviewed by Joe Wawrzyniak

#### **JACK PIERCE - THE MAN BEHIND THE MONSTERS**

On June 17, 2000, a multi-media presentation was staged at the Pasadena Convention Center. It was a one time-only, one performance experience. I

Pierce biography and began work on it, beginning in 1998. The result was the production in Pasadena that was captured for posterity via three video cameras and edited for this dvd. "One huge onstage monitor which showed film footage, stills and close-ups of the performers. We also had an audio system which fed in cues from the films, music, effects and other sounds. Offstage actors reading from scripts provided voice-overs. We had six scene changes which required completely new backdrops, sets and handmade props". Not only was the show done over five separate stages, but in one segment, in the audience. 100 professionals (16 actors and a total of 84 makeup artists, hair stylists and costumers) worked on the project...for nothing! All in order to pay tribute to a man who, despite his contributions to motion pictures, was almost forgotten by the industry he had been a part of during the last years of his life.

Jack Pierce himself is portrayed by Perry Shields, who in real life doesn't even come close to matching Pierce's distinctive features. Under the meticulous and painstaking makeup that makes him appear as Pierce must have looked in his last years, Shields is the blinding element of the

In addition to the stage show, the dvd features a behind-the-scenes look at the makeup being done on the actors during the day from 10am to 5pm. There is a "Memorabilia" section which includes the reunion of Pierce and Boris Karloff from *This Is Your Life* tribute to the actor, the audio track of an interview between Pierce and host Wayne Thomas from the old "Million Dollar Movie" TV program, a trailer for the DVD and a "historical timeline" listing that covers Pierce's life and career. The wrap-around cover is dominated on the front by a striking portrait of Pierce in his prime by artist Ray "Spooky" Santoleri (I'm not sure I want to know where the "Spooky" came from), bordered by thumbnail-sized shots of the various actors and the Pierce-created beings that are represented in the show.

Even with whatever flaws the production had, *Jack Pierce - the Man Behind the Monsters* is something that those who have enjoyed the old Universal thrillers and admired the work of Jack Pierce should see.

A final note: At the end of the show, when "Pierce", remarks those only 24 people showed up at his funeral (a sad comment on how he had been forgotten by the industry), he adds, "I know - know there were others."

The moment that follows, the sight of the various Universal beings standing by the casket, paying their own final tribute to their creator, is both touching and haunting.

*Jack Pierce - the Man Behind the Monsters* can be purchased for \$25.

[www.jackpierce.com/jackorderform.html](http://www.jackpierce.com/jackorderform.html)

Reviewed by Eric Hoffman

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had heard about it, but not in time to be among the audience of 500 people who viewed this unique production. After watching the DVD of *Jack Pierce - the Man Behind the Monsters*, my reaction was (and still is) "I wish I had been there."

*Jack Pierce* begins with a radio "announcement" of Pierce's death, followed by "Pierce" telling his own story, from his arrival in California from Chicago through his career as a makeup artist and finally his passing. As Pierce's story is told, photos (both biographical and from the films he worked on), audio tracks and live re-creations of scenes from such films as *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Son of Frankenstein*, and *The Wolf Man* are used to illustrate various moments or films in Pierce's career. Like countless fans of the chillers of the '30s through the '40s, I always had a special feeling for the creations of the man who was born Jaus Piccolini.

Even during the 1940s, when Universal was churning out countless B-pictures, Jack Pierce's meticulously crafted creatures were something dedicated horror fans would eagerly wait for, even in some of the poorer chillers. The Jack Pierce project was conceived by Scott Eszman, who had already put together tributes on *Piaget of the Ages* in 1997 and *The Wizard of Oz* in 1998. Following these productions, Eszman got the idea of the live

proceedings, telling Pierce's story in a voice that is remarkably close to the real man's tones. With almost no time to rehearse and get down the massive amount of dialogue that went with the part, Perry manages, for the most part, to create the illusion that he is referring to an ever-present "scrapbook" to refresh his memories. In reality, the pages of Scott Eszman's script were posted within the prop scrapbook's pages (there are a few shots where you can see some of this). There are moments where Shields has troubles but they are minor quibbles in performance that is at times touching, especially towards the end when "Pierce" reads a letter from makeup great Dick Smith, written when *Frankenstein* and *The Mummy* were first appearing on television. It was a moment that brought applause from the audience.

The makeupers themselves are wonderful, even if the voices of some of the actors don't work for their characters. The Monster, the Bride of Frankenstein, Ernest Thesiger's Dr. Pretorius, the Karloff "Mummy," The Bride of Frankenstein, Ygor and the Wolf Man have been lovingly recreated. Of the human characters, the makeupers for Colin Clive, Una O'Connor (although I wish the actress portraying her had been able to unleash O'Connor's trademark shrieks instead of the Zazu Pitts-style cries of fright) and Maria Oa sperokaya are standouts.

#### **CAUGHT (dir. Max Ophüls, 1949)**

Max Ophüls is one of those great directors of yesterday that everyone who has a little interest in films has heard of but whose films few have actually ever seen. One of those past masters whom has directed so many an accepted classic, his appeal has remained limited primarily to those folks who go to film museum retrospectives wearing black turtle neck sweaters. There is even a film prize named after him, The Max Ophüls Prize, which gets awarded with great regularity to some important new film that everyone should see but no one ever does.

Born Max Oppenheimer in 1902, he changed his name to Max Ophüls and left Germany, the land of his birth, for France in 1933, waving goodbye to those popular but ugly brown shirts as he went. Having already been involved in films for some time, Ophüls made a variety of films in and around France until, once again a few steps ahead of those ugly brown shirts, he arrived in Hollywood via Switzerland. In Hollywood he made even more films before eventually returning to France for another four features. In 1956 he finally found himself once again in the land of his birth, only to die there the following year.

Caught was a young Mrs. Ellie (Barbara Bel Geddes), James Mason and Robert Ryan, and, is one hopes, not the stuff from which Ophüls' reputation is built. The story must have been idli-



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ACT OF AGGRESSION, ARMY MEDICINE IN VIETNAM, AUTOPSY OF A GHOST, BARRY MCKENZIE HOLDS HIS OWN, BATTLE WIZARD, THE BIGGEST FIST, BLACK NOON, BRIGADE BLACK PANTHER, THE CHINESE MECHANIC, COFFIN SOUZA'S FREAK CIRCUS, THE CONCORDE AFFAIR, COWBOY IN SWEDEN, DANISH ESCORT GIRLS, DEADLY CHINA DOLL, DEATH CHEATERS, DEEP THROAT IN TOKYO, DINNER FOR ADELE, EMPEROR TOMATO KETCHUP, ENTER THE DEVIL, EROS CENTER HAMBURG, FEMMINE CARNIVORES, FRAULEINS IN UNIFORM, GAME SHOW MODELS, GIRLS AT THE GYNCOLOGIST, THE GODFATHER SQUAD, GONKS GO BEAT, HALLS OF ANGER, HELL RAIDERS, HELLISH SPIDERS, THE HOTTEST SHOW IN TOWN, I.K.U., I KILLED EINSTEIN GENTLEMEN, I SAILED TO TAHITI WITH AN ALL GIRL CREW, I WANT TO BE A WOMAN, I WOKE UP EARLY THE DAY I DIED, KILINK ISTANBULDA, KILLERS ON WHEELS, LIBIDOMANIA, LADY EXTERMINATOR, LAST OF THE KNUCKLEMAN, LSD: FLESH OF THE DEVIL, MAGIC CURSE, MANILA OPEN CITY, THE MANSON MASSACRE, MATINEE HOOKERS, MISS COMET, MY OLD MAN'S PLACE, NAKED AS NATURE INTENDED, NAKED VIOLENCE, NIGHTMARE HONEYMOON, NOTHIN' BUT BLONDES, NURSES FOR SALE, OUTRAGE, PENELOPE PULLS IT OFF, PETTICOAT PIRATES, THE PHYNX, PIGS VS. FREAKS, POPULATION: ONE, PRINCESS XUXA AND THE TRAPALHOES, THE PUSSYCAT SYNDROME, RAIDERS OF THE PARADISE, REDNECK COUNTY, THE RELUCTANT SADIST, REVENGE IN THE TIGER CAGE, SHOTGUN WEDDING, SIGN OF THE PAGAN, SIX PACK ANNIE, THE STRANGE VENGEANCE OF ROSALIE, STRANGLEHOLD IN A WOMENS PRISON, SUICIDE CIRCLE, SUPERBUG GOES WILD, TATTOOED TEARS, TEENAGE TRAMP, THREE SUPERMEN AND MAD GIRL, THREE SWEDISH GIRLS IN HAMBURG, TIGER LOVE, TORRENTE: THE STUPID ARM OF THE LAW, TRAIN STATION PICK UPS, UGLY WORLD, VIXENS OF KUNG FU, WHAT BECAME OF JACK & JILL?, WHITE POP JESUS, WOMEN IN HEAT BEHIND BARS, YOUR VICE IS A LOCKED ROOM AND ONLY I HAVE THE KEY, AND THOUSANDS MORE!!!  
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otically simplistic, old and laughably unbelievable even back when the film was made in 1949, and none of the director's obvious ingenuity and creativity can hide the creaking bones of the story, the faults of the badly-written script, or Barbara Bel Geddes' inability to act (though she did improve a lot by Dallas). Bel Geddes plays an all American gal who goes to charm school so as to improve her lot and angle a millionaire; she eventually hooks the tyrannical and paranoid Robert Ryan, a multi-millionaire suffering from psychosomatic heart attacks. He treats her like doggie-doo, so she leaves him to live in the slums and work as a receptionist in a chaotic pediatrician's practice on the East Side. James Mason plays one of the two pediatricians, the man obviously perfect for our heroine (he even proposes marriage before she has even kissed, let alone gotten to the nitty-gritty). Unluckily, Bel Geddes happens to be in a family way due to a momentary lapse of judgment in regards to Robert Ryan, so she returns to her gilded cage. Mason learns the truth about her past, but like a man truly in love, he doesn't care. The mother to be, however, due both to her own indecision and under the pressure of Ryan's threats to eventually take her future baby away via a dirty divorce, stays with her hubby. He, in turn, realizing that he can never dominate her, sets out to destroy her psychologically and mentally. By film's end, Ryan is a broken man, Bel Geddes miscarries, Mason gets the girl, and money is shown once again to be the root of all evil. Even Moms will groan in disbelief at the end of the film; people with less reserve might scream or throw tomatoes.

Okay, let's give Ophuls some credit here, though. He was obviously a talented man, for his grasp of film as a medium is remarkable. The blocking of the actors, the use of interiors, the angles of the camera, the use of pan shots and deep focus, the editing, the lighting is all top notch and reveals true talent. If one only takes in account how *Caught* is made on a technical level, the film is rather brilliant. But, regrettably, at the end of the day, even gold-plated crap still stinks.

Reviewed by Abraham Berlin

#### THE ASSIGNMENT

(dir. Christian Duguay, 1997, USA)

A typical Christian Duguay film in that the excellent direction easily surpasses the more than inconsistent and flawed script. As normal, Duguay not only gets top-notch performances from all his actors, but his camera work is uniformly creative and interesting. The opening track shot in Paris alone is a technical wonder worth seeing, even if one doesn't bother to watch the whole film. If one makes it to the first explosion, however, it is highly unlikely one will not watch *The Assignment* to its end, for as incredulous and unsatisfactory as the story might be, Duguay nonetheless delivers an excellent, involving thriller. Considering the superlative work the man has done with some of his badly scripted projects of the past - including *Lee Wire* (1992), the campy *Model by Day* (1994) and *Screamers*

(1995) - one can only wonder what Duguay would be capable of if he were ever given a decent script. It is a shame that Dan Gordon didn't put as much work into his story this time around as he did in the screenplay for *Murder In The First* (1995), and instead chose to be as slapdash and careless as he was with *Passenger 57* (1992) and *Surf Ninjas* (1993). (How much influence co-writer Sabi H. Shabai had on the script's development is up to question, as he doesn't seem to have been credited in any other theatrical release as of yet.)

Aidan Quinn, an interesting and talented actor who has never really achieved the renown that he seemed destined for after his second film *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985) is the actual star of this film, playing two roles, that of both the cold blooded super-terrorist Carlos and the navy man Annibal Ramirez. Donald Sutherland costars with another one of his top notch interpretations as the CIA agent Jack Shaw/Henry Fields, a man obsessed with destroying the deadly terrorist who on more than one occasion has made him a fool. Ben Kingsley is Amos, a highly sympathetic agent (either of England or the MOSAD, it is not made clear) who first discovers Carlos' (unrelated) lookalike and ends up biting the dust in an airport shoot out. Basically, Carlos The Jackal is a super terrorist who likes to fuck and throw splinter grenades when he isn't busy hiding out in various lands unfriendly to the democratic ways of the free world. Annibal, an innocent Latino American military man and Carlos look alike gets busted in Israel by Amos when he mistakes him as the terrorist. A married family man, he more or less gets forced by Jack/Henry and Amos to take on the assignment of impersonating Carlos so as to either force the bad man out of hiding or to destroy his standing amongst his employers and thus (so to say) sign his death warrant. After an exceedingly long training sequence, the ball gets rolling when Annibal moves on to Libya as Carlos to meet up with one of the terrorist's ex-fucks from France. After "Fuckin' for the flag," as Jack/Henry puts it so nicely, the plan backfires when the French secret intelligence tries to wipe out the man they think is Carlos. Annibal escapes, but kills numerous "good guys" along the way. Soon thereafter, his cover gets blown at Heathrow, but both it and his life is saved by Amos, who dies in the process. Slowly losing his own identity, Annibal wants to get off the boat, but is blackmailed by Jack/Henry to continue playing ball. Off to East Germany he goes in a last ditch attempt to destroy the world's most deadly terrorist...

*The Assignment* may be an exciting, highly watchable and fast moving film featuring excellent acting and top notch direction, but it nonetheless leaves an taste of dissatisfaction in the mouth of any viewer that looks beyond the action and blood. While the film may be unpredictable, it is only so because it is so illogical. The whole concept of identical but unrelated twins is beyond credibility, as is the idea that some Joe Schmo is not only viable but also the only person capable of

stepping some super terrorist (as Annibal is constantly told he is). And military man or not, who can believe that some family man can learn in a few months all that some super terrorist has learned in a lifetime? The occasional sub-plot of how Annibal feels as if he is losing his own (and real) identity might be interesting, but it is touched so lightly that it seems out of place. Likewise, the big final punch-& shoot-out is completely unsatisfactory, leaving one as annoyed as a limp dick does.

In fact, the only excuse for such an unsatisfactory, anti-climactic ending is that the film makers probably wanted to present a bleak vision of espionage similar to that of Le Carre's early spy novels. They fail completely, and the idiotic ending stolen from the even more idiotic film *Eraser* (1996) does little to help. To enjoy completely, *The Assignment* requires the removal of one's brain before viewing. Do so, and one is in for an exciting and engrossing ride.

Reviewed by Abraham Berlin



#### HONEYMOONERS HOLIDAY CLASSICS

(1987, MPI Home Video)

Here's a boxed set of two tapes, four *Honeymooners* segments from the 1950's Jackie Gleason Show. Two of the episodes are from 1953, and are specials pertaining to Christmas and New Years. The second two are undated, and carry the titles "Two-Family Car" and "Forgot to Register." I guess voting day is a kind of holiday. Any episode of *The Honeymooners* is worth watching, but it is this voting day segment that is of special interest, for a variety of reasons.

It appears to be from 1956 or so, since the Kraenden "kitchen/living room" is as sturdy as it ever got, not the flimsy canvas walls that rippled in the breeze or when a door opened, that which appeared in the early 1950's installments now known as "The Lost Episodes." This sketch in question in question doesn't focus on women's lib, but it does show Alice (Audrey Meadows)

standing up for herself more calmly and rationally than ever. It is a well-written sketch that gives a glimmer of what *All in the Family* might have been like if Gleason had signed on as Archie Bunker. Gleason had touted the story that CBS had first asked him to play the part of Archie, a logical choice and a believable story since the network was paying Gleason, then off the airwaves \$100,000.00 per year whether he worked or not, so long as he didn't work for another network. Many critics have commented on the similarities between the two shows, and some breathed a sigh of relief that Gleason did not indeed essay the Bunker role, feeling that Carol O'Connor was the mellow, more multi-dimensional performer. I may have felt as much, for I admire *All in the Family* as it is, as much as I enjoy ANY of the various incarnations of *The Honeymooners*.

But then I saw this rarely-seen episode they're calling "Forgot to Register," and I was ready to re-evaluate everything. Gleason is still the greatest comedian in the history of television, and this is one of the most fantastic episodes of his show. It has all the production value of the "Classic 39" that everyone's familiar with, but it

now that he cannot cast a ballot for the unworthy candidate. Some *Honeymooners* episodes are guilty of going for the quick-fix happy ending. Not so here. This one is written and played with such sophistication, it is way beyond anything Archie and Edith ever did with similar subject matter. It is perhaps an historical moment in television, whether or not you're a fan of the series.

As always, Art Carney holds his own against any of *The Great One's* bluster, and by this time their on-screen relationship was honed to perfection. Carney claimed he generally felt closer to Gleason when they were working on camera in a sketch, than he did during any of their limited off-screen relationship. In this sketch one truly gets the feeling of them as two neighbors, rather than two actors playing a part in a show.

The most exciting news is that, further so-called lost episodes will soon be available on home video. Jackie's widow Marilyn has negotiated a deal to release the color, one-hour musical *Honeymooners* done in the mid-1960s from Miami Beach. These will be timed for release with the two big-screen features pertaining to Jackie which are now in production. We'll have

two! And then it dawns on us that William Malone, the director, was the same ham-fisted auteur that rendered William Castle's silly and escapist *House on Haunted Hill* into an ugly, disgusting remake back in 1999. STEEEEEEE-RILL-LIKE THREE!

Without wasting too much bandwidth, let's just say the film steals blatantly from *Japer's Ring* series. So, then, photographer Joel Peter-Witkin and the viewer's nose into horror movie art direction that can only be termed "mold-and-mildew shabby chic."

*FearDotCom* takes up the premise of David Cronenberg's *Psi8000* (1983) in that people who willingly would go to a pay-per-surf Web site deserve whatever they get. The victims are punished in essence "for looking." The audience watching this film is punished "for looking," but not in ways originally intended.

In a world full of cheap shots and pity put-downs, it's all too easy to say that the only do-om one needs to fear is the one you stake your life savings in. Reviewed by Greg Goodsell

## DEEP IN THE WOODS

(2000)French; D. Lionel Delplaque

A motley coveit of attractive, but untalented thespians are hired by a flaky, testy, crippled millionaire (a wonderfully loud and flamboyant turn by Francois Berleand) who resides in an opulent castle abode in a remote woodland area, to put on a play for his scarily quiet autistic grandson. A vicious rapist and serial killer with a foul penchant for butchering lovely young ladies has been conducting a brutal campaign of terror in the same area. Come nightfall many of the actors and actresses start getting bumped off in assorted ghastly ways. Could it be the serial killer of someone else behind the gruesome snuffings?

Director Lionel Delplaque carefully establishes a genuinely spooky and unnerving tone in the deliberately paced opening third before cutting loose with a breathtaking series of ghoulish murder set pieces. Better yet, Delplaque adeptly blends the brooding mid-night-in-the-graveyard atmosphere of '60s Gothic horror features with the more graphic gag-you-with-a-pitchfork gore that proliferated in the gritty '70s fright films into a potentially creepy and jarring synthesis. The strikingly savage murder scenes make inspired use of a nail gun, a harpoon, scalding acid, and other deadly implements. And since this is a European movie, there's an explicitly pronounced kinky sexual angle to further spice things up: stunningly comely starlet Clotilde Courau doffs all her duds to show us what she's got some 15 minutes into the pic. Plus we have lesbianism, voyeurism, and the full-bodied Maud Buquet taking a welcome steamy shower. Quite simply one of the best, most harsh, and properly twisted shockathons to come from Europe in a long while, this was a surprise hit in its native France and deserves to amass a sizeable following here in the States.

Reviewed by Scary Joe Winnywink

# Film & Video Reviews

was never shown with them. And they're not really selling this as a "Lost Episode," though it surely is a rare one.

The premise is simple. Ralph and Ed have been busy campaigning for Penrose for Mayor, staging a rally, passing out campaign buttons, flyers, and so forth. Everything Ralph's spouting about Penrose demonstrate him to be a shark in wolf's clothing, but somehow Ralph is blind to that. So is his eternally loyal pal, Ed Norton.

The balloons gets deflated quickly, and twofold. Ralph tells his wife they have to hurry and get down to the voting hall to vote for Penrose. When Alice tells him she's not voting for Penrose, there's a moment of expected gusto from Gleason. "What do you mean you're not voting for Penrose? I'm voting for him, and a woman has to vote the way her husband votes if I'm not in error!" She sets him straight, telling him he can vote any way he likes, but she doesn't think Penrose is the better candidate; it's as simple as that.

Never has Alice told Ralph to "fuck off" more succinctly than she does here.

Gleason goes through a range of emotions, expertly phasing from anger, to disbelief, and then sudden alarm when he realizes that he's been so busy campaigning that he forgot to go down and register to vote. There is no happy resolution here, where Alice gives in to vote her husband's way

more news on all these subjects in our next issue.

Reviewed by Michael Capner

## FEARDOTCOM (2002)

Caught a special screening of *FearDotCom* in conjunction with the Fungoria Weekend of Horrors in Pasadena last year. Would I be surprising anyone if I told you that there was nothing to fear in the limp over-cooked project?

From the web site:

"A fresh young police detective (Stephen Dorff) joins forces with a beautiful, ambitious Department of Health researcher (Natascha McElhone) to find the answers behind the mysterious deaths of four people who each died 43 hours after logging on to the Internet site FearDotCom. What they discover is as mysterious as the deaths themselves and more terrifying than anything they ever dreamed of."

Yeah, whatever.

The film shoots itself in the foot in the first five minutes. Right off the bat we start with Udo Kier being menaced in a subway by an angelic little girl in a horrendous plastic wig bouncing a ball. This image is plucked lock, stock and smoking barrel from Mario Bava's *Kill, Baby Kill* (1966) by way of Federico Fellini's "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" segment from *Spirits of the Dead* (1966) with neither director's skill or subtlety. Strike one! Udo is abruptly killed off and so the film is denied an eccentric, memorable screen appearance by this beloved character actor. Strike

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# Film & Video Reviews

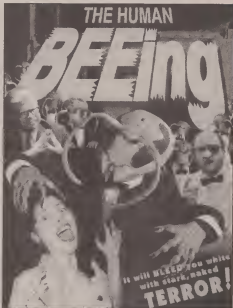
## THE HUMAN BEEING (2002, dir. Tony Shea)

A spoof of 1950s sci-fi creature films, *The Human BEEing* is a 45-minute b&w short whose running gags get funnier with each occurrence. There's the misguided scientist who gets repeatedly mauled by his horrible creation, the title character. There's the crooked businessman who continues to call the creature by the wrong name, the "Hum-Bee." There's the harmless janitor who inadvertently gives someone a fright when he makes his every appearance. There's the middle management schlub who, when confronted by any plotpoint exposition, can only think to utter, "Whaddaya sayin'?"

The film's story concerns geneticist Dr. Charles Metzenbeamer (Jim Coughlin), who has been hired to cross a diligent worker bee with a human typist to create the speediest speed typist the world has ever seen. Funding the experiment is greedy typing tycoon Allen Danasco (Eric Hoffman), whose desire for quick profits forces Dr. Metzenbeamer's work to move at an unsafe rate. Naturally, things go awry.

*The Human BEEing* works both as a '50s sci-fi spoof and as broad comedy. The film begins with a warning from its "producer," who discourages people with maladies and medical conditions from watching. And while this warning effectively spoofs 1950s horror gimmickmeister William Castle, the "producer" rattles off such a lonnngng list of conditions that it becomes broad humor, not unlike hypochondriac Bob Wiley's lonnngng list of afflictions in *What About Bob*.

My only quibble: While *The Human BEEing* gets the "misguided scientist" character just right (think Lee Van Cleef in Roger Corman's *It Conquered the World* or Peter Graves in Bert I. Gordon's *Beginning of the End*), the "crooked businessman" character seems out of place. Most of the 1950s sci-fi beasts resulted from science gone wrong – usually an a-bomb detonating in the Arctic Circle or Yucca Flats or somewhere – and capitalistic greed wasn't really a factor. [www.piefightfilms.com](http://www.piefightfilms.com) Reviewed by Mike Malloy



## DR. ACULA'S DIARY

as transcribed by  
Forrest J Ackerman

*First There Was Jules Verne. Then there was (and is) Verne Langdon...*

I read with consummate interest "The Verne Langdon Story" by Vernesville his Elf Self in Cult Movies #37. But Verne was too modest, or else his memory is diminished by his advanced age. (He attended my 86th Birthday Bash but looked the picture of youth. Please introduce me to your friend Ponce DeLeon.)

How about you at the keyboards on those 3 great record albums "Phantom of the Organ", "Poe With Pipes", and "Vampire of the Harpsichord"? What about the day you got me on TV together with the real *Bride of Frankenstein*, Elsa Lanchester? And What about mastering that legendary record album *An Evening With Boris Karloff And His Friends*? (So popular that it was pirated in Japan?) What about the time on a moment's notice when you played the organ accompaniment to *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Phantom of the Opera* at the Gordon Theater tribute to the *Man of a Thousand Faces*, and at midnight of the day he was born played "Happy Birthday" so that the audience (including Chaney relatives, Ray Bradbury, Brian Forbes and myself) could sing "Dear Chaney"??? What about the reception for Boris Karloff that you arranged at the Magic Castle in Hollywood?

What about my numerous Birthday Parties at the Biltmore Hotel where you had the participants rolling under their tables with your hysterical monologs? How come you didn't mention you're a relative of the great silent screen comedian Harry Langdon?

Yes, you have much to account for, Verne!

And I'm counting on you wowing 'em at my 100th Birthday at the Friars Club. Cine-cerely, Forrest J Ackerman



Forrest J Ackerman and  
Verne Langdon



Japan's favorite movie monster may be Godzilla, but Toho studio's other popular movie genres include war, comedy, gangster, horror and fantasy.

The *H-Man* (released by Columbia 1959), called *Beauty and The Liquid People* in Japan, was a Toho hybrid movie: a combination of sci-fi, horror and gangster genres that probably worked best as horror. Also, as a gangster/horror movie, it fits neatly into the "film noir" genre.

Like *The Human Vapor* (1960), director Ishiro Honda uses scientific research as a primary element, but this time science itself is only in the background. The scientists in the story are relatively weak. Neither creating nor destroying the H-Man, they only explain that the menace was caused by H-bomb tests. As in *Dagon*: *The Space Monster* (1964), gangsters were the dominant element, but became a separate sub-plot in *The H-Man* as the monster took over the story. The *H-Man*'s first image, in the original Japanese movie, is a mushroom-shaped cloud framed and tinted into an abstract, almost beautiful image. Out of the radioactive cloud springs a newspaper that concerns a ship, and then the scene cuts to a ship gliding across the sea as the title cards begin.

As the opening credits roll we see the ghostly ship from several angles until the camera slowly zooms into a deserted pilothouse. Oddly, the title theme music is a rousing military-style march that sharply clashes with the eerie mood of the visuals. When the title cards end, the scene dissolves into rain flowing down a city street. The purely visual narrative of the opening montage neatly connects an H-bomb test to a ship. Those images flow smoothly into rainwater running down a city street, introducing a motif that we will see repeatedly.

The story begins as a man, (who turns out to be a thief making a getaway) shoots at something, screams and simply vanishes into the rain, leaving his empty clothes and a bag behind. Soon we learn that the narcotics-killed bag interests the police who are already investigating the gang behind the narcotics traffic. The missing person case becomes part of the anti-gang campaign.

After the police determine that the bag of drugs was stolen from the gang's leader in a mob rivalry, the missing man's wife Chikako (Yumi Shirakawa), a nightclub singer, becomes the focus of their investigation. After rudely rousing her from sleep (and trying to peek at her getting dressed), the police take her in to assist in their inquiries.

The chief detective, Tomioka (Akishiko Hirata), presumes the missing man's wife is involved in the racket and interrogates her. The police team decides to follow her, using the distraught and thoroughly confused woman as bait to attract the gangsters.

At the nightclub, Dr. Masada (Kenji Sahara) is in the audience. Chikako approaches him as she sings and he attracts her attention with a note. She sees the note while singing "...Darling, I must have this dance with you, as you can certainly see at a glance, I'm completely under your spell..."

He also quickly comes to the attention of the watching policemen, who later seize him in Chikako's dressing room before he has a chance to tell her exactly why he is there. Sahara portrays his character as shy and polite like the soft-spoken scientist he played in *The Mysterians* (1957). He explains to the suspicious

policemen that he approached the singer because he has a theory that the mobster's disappearance is connected to the fate of the ghost ship. Tomioka, who already knows Masada, dismisses his scientific investigations in the nightclub and tells him to stay out of the police matter.

The story seems to take two separate paths at this point. The police continue to pursue the stalled investigation of the gang for narcotic trafficking and other unspecified crimes while Masada and the girl try to warn the authorities of the danger from the "Liquid People." The two story lines do not converge until the last act.

Back in her nightclub dressing room, a gangster threatens Chikako, demanding to know the whereabouts of her missing husband. Aware of her police surveillance, he sneaks out a window into the rain. Having been cued to the danger of rain in the opening scene, we anticipate the futile gunshots and anguished screams that follow, mirroring the drug-courier's death scene.

Questioned by the police about the dressing room incident, Chikako tells them she saw a "green shadow" in the street, but they think it was really her missing husband. Masada is

humanoid shape, also claims a victim on the ship.

After that scene's abject terror, the chief detective Tomioka scoffs at the story as a "sailor's tale." The detectives have decided that the disappearances are not connected to the survivors of the ghost ship incident.

Dr. Masada convinces the police to come to his laboratory and observe a demonstration of the effects of radiation. A frog is subjected to the radiation pulse and liquefies before the policemen's eyes. The demonstration of the melted frog's cells becoming a living liquid creature viewed through the microscope, evidence of debris from the ship exposed to radioactive fallout found in Tokyo Bay, the ship's logbook... and everything else demonstrating a link between the ghost ship and the missing gangsters fall on the detectives' deaf ears and closed minds.

After Masada speaks with Chikako, she reveals that she saw a man dissolve in the rain. With a witness, Masada insists the cops see more evidence of the man-melting menace.

Chikako finally offers to identify the gangsters and their go-between, a waiter in the nightclub. In another wordless visual narrative, the detectives observe the gangsters' interactions and begin to arrest them while Chikako sings, beginning the movie's wildest scene.

After Chikako's song, a flashily lit, wild, fast, jazzy dance begins. As the musical tempo increases, so does the police action. Uniformed police arrive outside preparing for the raid as falling rain alerts the viewer that the H-Man is not far away.

Sure enough, just as the arrests begin, the radioactive blobs begin to flow out of a canal and into the nightclub. Chaos breaks out as a resisting gangster fires a shot, alerting the rest of the gang to the raid just as the liquid creatures begin dissolving them and threatening Chikako. A detective foolishly attacks a gaseous-form H-Man and graphically melts in the most horrifying shot in the film. A scantily clothed dancer is also consumed in shocking scene. Her skimpy costume, jewelry and shoes lying on the floor offer another grisly reminder the blob's terror.

Finally, the true horror of the H-Man is apparent to all and even the doubting Tomioka is confronted with incontrovertible proof of Masada's theory.

Masada performs a more complete demonstration of irradiated frog melting into an H-Frog and that blob attacks and dissolves a second frog. The police no longer have any doubts. "A liquid creature... produced by an H-bomb explosion! Couldn't it be called H-Man?" a detective finally ponders aloud.

The scientists and police hold the traditional conference to plan the counter-measures. Electricity and fire are determined to be the only effective weapons. However, one gangster, Uchida, has evaded the H-Man and the police by leaving his clothes behind to throw them off his trail. Just before the authorities begin their plan to burn the H-Man out of the Tokyo sewers, Uchida kidnaps Chikako and, after a brief car chase, with Masada in pursuit, takes her down into the sewers to recover hidden heroin.

Luckily, Masada determines where Uchida took Chikako into the sewer and rushes in after them. Now believing in the H-Man, Tomioka follows him down to rescue her.

With the flames are closing in, the H-Man drops down on Uchida and he becomes its last liquefied victim, leaving his clothes floating away in the sewer water. At the last possible

## Retrospective of the H-MAN by Richard Pusateri

much more interested in the second disappearance and insists that Tomioka listen to eyewitnesses who saw men dissolve.

To convince the detectives of the link between the missing mobsters and the ghost ship, Masada takes them to meet fishermen who have survived an encounter with the H-Man. As the police hear the story, the movie's first vividly shocking monster attack scene comes in a well-done flashback set piece.

The eerie scene on the haunted ship is quite effectively lit and photographed. The creepy ambience was later recapitulated by director Honda in *Metango* (1963) (U.S. *Attack of the Mushroom People*).

The fishing boat's crew discovers the seemingly abandoned ghost ship and boards it, finding the missing sailors' empty clothes laid out in a dramatic foreshadowing of the horror to come. After some dread-filled suspenseful minutes, the creeping terror is first glimpsed.

The suspense is amplified by a crewmember's drowning. He dons a dead man's clothes as his own doom oozes toward him. Soon the blob sets to work claiming victims; attacking from below by creeping up the pants legs and from above, dropping down on its victims, screaming as they melt. The H-Man's other manifestation, a gaseous form that takes a

# ALL H- BREAKS LOOSE!

IT'S THE  
MOST  
HORRIFYING  
MONSTER  
YOU  
NEVER  
SAW!

## "THE H- MAN"

A COLUMBIA PICTURE - EASTMAN COLOR

moment, Masada rescues Chikako and flame-throwers kill the beast with the gaseous H-Man making a final eerie manifestation in the flames.

As the ambulance carrying Chikako to safety races over the burning river, the main scientist (Koreya Senda) intones over the visuals of the flaming water: "The creatures have been destroyed. Their destruction today is no guarantee for the future. If man perishes from the face of the earth due to the effects of hydrogen bombing, it is possible that the next ruler of our planet may be the H-Man!"

The H-Man was probably inspired by the U.S. movie *The Blob*, however with the additional element of the hydrogen bomb as the ever-present prime mover in Japanese sci-fi movies. The element of a fishing boat covered in fallout from an H-bomb test continues the reverberations of the real-life "Lucky Dragon No. 5" tragic accident of 1954.

This time H-bomb fallout created not a giant monster, but the H-man, a creeping, radioactive puddle that dissolves its screaming victims. Perhaps if the monster continued to claim more victims, its size would have increased to daikaiju or giant monster proportions.

Besides borrowing from an American film the idea of a creeping, amorphous monster that absorbs its victims, *The H-Man* uses a prologue often added to Japanese sci-fi for American consumption — stock footage of a nuclear explosion. In movies like *Raiden* and *Gigantis*, *The Fire Monster*, footage of nuclear explosions were added to the beginning even though, especially in *Raiden*, the tests were not the cause of the monster's appearance.

In a sharp departure from the kaija eiga genre, *The H-Man* is clearly an adult film. The somber atmosphere of menace, the subtle visual narratives not the stark interrogations

would not captivate children. The graphic gore and "racy" nightclub scenes of scantily clad dancing girls, by 1958 standards, would be inappropriate in the more family-oriented movies like *Raiden* or *The Mysterians* of the same time period.

The H-Man can be interpreted as having many elements of film noir. Although it is in color and the hero is not brought down by a duplicitous femme fatale, there are strong, clear connections to the downbeat movie genre. Like *D.O.A.* and *Kiss Me, Deadly*, the conflict is driven by post World War II technological horrors that eventually kill the protagonists in a gritty realistic big city landscape.

The H-Man has an atmosphere of dread and fear, almost paranoia. Dark, rainy streets are the prime locale. There is the classic film noir sense of evil pervading every corner of every frame of every shot of every scene. Evil is seen as a radioactive blob creeping under the doors or through the windows. Evil is flowing with the rain down the streets into the sewers.

The early scene of the gangster, emerging from the shadows in silhouette, wearing a hat and overcoat, face hidden from the light, to threaten Chikako with a gun and slap her around is a pure, classic film noir scene of gritty street-wise realism (however in color). If dark, rain-slicked streets are emblematic of film noir, then the shot of the dissolved gangster's empty clothes and pistol lying in the rainy street are the genre's pure, distilled expression of modern urban environment squeezing the life out of the individual.

Loss of control over a character's life is noir. Progressively Chikako becomes innocently and helplessly entangled in plots and incomprehensible sub-plots. In the last scenes, she is kidnapped by a mad gangster, stripped down to her lingerie, knee deep in sewer water with gasoline burning behind her and the H-Man in front of her. Chikako is not in control at that point of her life.

There is classic noir moral ambiguity in the good guys/bad guys conflict. It is a gangster vs "bad cop" movie. While the detectives are certainly not corrupt, neither are they really the good guys. The cops showing Chikako her dead husband's property for shock effect to soften her up for questioning in another nice noir touch.

Their wise-guy cynicism, the suspicious and rough treatment of everyone (innocent and guilty alike), and inability to recognize the presence of the "unusual phenomenon" (the radioactive blob) all diminish the policemen's moral authority. Not to mention their investigative skills. Dr. Masada's ominous warns "This thing could destroy us all" and Tominaga replies "Hm, that's awful!"

The art direction by Takeo Kita and cinematography by Hajime Koizumi were top notch especially in the nightclub scenes. While

Chikako sings her two numbers, the camera in deep focus follows her through the crowded, colorful nightclub with action taking place in the foreground and the background. There is plenty detail in the complex shots to keep the viewer riveted to the visual narrative taking place while Chikako's singing occupies the soundtrack. The photography in the ghost ship and the sewer scenes are effective use of limited light to heighten suspense in Honda's claustrophobically composed shots. Especially in the sewers, Honda increases the urgency and foreboding by choosing medium close-ups with walls for background instead of more spacious views down the passageway.

Eiji Tsuburaya's special effects are subtle but effective, especially the doomed ships, and the gaseous form of the H-Man. Instead of pyrotechnics and collapsing buildings, the spfx this time create horrifying melting men in eerie environments. The spfx were skillfully blended and matched to the principal photography in contrast to many kaiju movies where the monsters prowled and wrought havoc in one shot and the live actors pointed, saying "Look at that!" in the next.

The flowing blob and the liquefying people effects were not perfect but in the 1958 theaters, the effects must have been startling. Too startling for American audiences, apparently as some of the shocking and horrific scenes were shortened or deleted in the Columbia release making it eight minutes shorter than the original. Most obviously, the shots of the dancer being consumed and her empty costume, shoes and jewelry lying on the floor. Several minutes of actionless exposition were also cut.

Instead of the innovative opening bomb-ship-rain montage, the Columbia *The H-Man* begins the explosion and cuts to the credits running over a still shot of a gaseous H-Man. There are a few minutes trimmed from some scenes and some dialogue is added to Honda's visual exposition sequences.

The dubbing for the American version had a few glaring problems. While the dubbing is very good matching the English words to the actor's lip movements, the fake Japanese accents are laughably crude. "We must close the club" is an example of the over-substitution of "rs" for "bs" to simulate a Japanese accent in English words.

The unmistakable voice of talented legend Paul Frees is over-used to the extent that almost every male voice seems done by him. The detectives sounded suspiciously alike and more than one was doing an Edward G. Robinson impression.

Writer Takeshi Kimura may have intended the detectives' similarity. Always the rebel with anti-authority themes, Kimura portrayed the detectives as thickheaded bullies so having them all act and talk like each other was his goal. Indeed, Kimura characterizes the police as ineffective at controlling the mob or recognizing the monster terrorizing Tokyo.

There is little faith in science either as the early demonstrations fail to convince the police of the threat or finally good old-fashioned fire is chosen as the best weapon to fight H-Man.

The usual Toho monster movie mysteries go unexplained as usual. Why only the H-bomb fallout drastically affected a few people; why the monster comes to Tokyo and why it seems to pursue gangsters are not addressed here.

The confusing mixture of genres finally boils down to a film noir as an effective horror movie. *The H-Man* continued to specifically denote objection to tests of H-bombs in the serious tone of the original *Godzilla* —

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# INTERVIEW with MICHAEL BERRYMAN by RON FORD

*As a friend once said to me, Michael Berryman is Rhonda Hatton with more talent. A quiet, spiritual man with a deep love for nature, Berryman seems the total antithesis of a Hollywood "actor" type. And his gentle nature is a hundred and eighty degrees away from the heavens he often plays on the screen. He's best known as the in-bred mutant in THE HILLS HAVE EYES, but Michael Berryman has been on the screen for over thirty years now, acting in a variety of genres.*

*Over the years he has played a remarkably diverse array of character roles. He has had a diverse and unpredictable career — He has worked with legendary sci-fi pioneer George Pal, and with acclaimed director Milos Forman. He has worked on television, and in music videos. He has done mainstream motion pictures and low-budget exploitation. — Recently I had the good pleasure of discussing it all with him.*

CM: Did you always want to be an actor?

MB: No. I actually wanted to homestead in Alaska and live with nature and kind of do a Jeremiah Johnson thing. And be with the animals. I was happier around animals than people. Not that I didn't have friends, I just found animals more friendly, more accepting. I was young when I got into acting. I was in my twenties. You know, you look a little different and all that stuff.

CM: So did someone approach you about doing a role for them?

MB: Yes, actually. I had a small plant shop on Venice Beach and a very famous producer, George Pal, walked into my store. His son and daughter in law had an antique shop across the street. They were talking and they just came over to take a look around the shop. And he (George Pal) thought I had the look he needed to play the Undertaker in DOC SAVAGE with Ron Ely — the guy who played Tarzan (on television). It was based on some dime novel guys that were actually quite popular. They wrote, I think, about a hundred and twenty of them. George was going to do a whole series of them. Unfortunately, George died about a year after we made the film. I worked about two days. Got my union card. We filmed it at the Harold Lloyd mansion, the famous actor from the golden years.

CM: And then your second film was huge. ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST.

MB: That's right. That happened ironically because the casting director for Doc Savage — (although) I was cast by George — the casting director was (also) casting for CUCKOO'S NEST. And so they got a look at me and I had a meeting with Michael Douglas and Milos Forman and Saul Zantz. CM: What was Nicholson like in those days?

MB: Oh, Jack was younger, you know, he had more hair. A very lively fellow. Very chupper, very into the role. He told me that if he had been taller that he would have been a professional basketball player. An avid, avid, avid sports fan.

CM: Yeah, he's at all of the Lakers games.

MB: Yeah. Actually, when we had the basketball scene in the film, you know, he actually has good footwork. He has good moves. He's a pretty good player. A really down to earth kind of person, you know. He really tells it like it is. (doing a pretty fair Nicholson impression) That's Jack.

CM: So then did you fall in love with acting? Did it displace your plans for Alaskan homesteading?

MB: Well, I was born with some birth defects that kinda limited the jobs that I could do. Based upon if it was too warm, I can't work with toxic chemicals, you know, things of that nature. Basically acting, it's hard work, it's laborious work, it's mentally stimulating, it's artistically challenging. You're telling a story. Each job you have is in a different location, different group of people, different demands. And I liked all of that. I always wanted to be an artist. I have an art minor at the University

of California. I always thought an artist was someone who wasn't appreciated until they were dead. Then people catch up with their mind and they go, "Oh, they really were a genius, and not a lunatic," and "Oh, yes, this work is really quite fascinating." So I thought maybe I would get a chance to be expressive, artistic, and maybe make a living at it.

CM: Have you trained much since then?

MB: Oh, no, no training at all. I learned on the job with CUCKOO'S NEST. On my days off I would go to the set anyway, and I would ask questions whenever I had the opportunity, from the camera men the make-up artists, the wardrobe people, the writers, the electricians that were doing the lighting. I asked tons of questions. Terminology, what does this mean? Why do you do this? Why is it important? You know. How to make a movie.

What the process was and I found all of that very fascinating because it was such a team effort. And it was also kind of nice because you have a hundred plus people who become an immediate extended family. You get to deal with everybody's weaknesses and shortcomings, their strengths.

As a matter of fact when we did CUCKOO'S NEST we had a package that was sent to everybody by the production. It was a nice welcome to Salem (Oregon, where the movie was shot). You know, blah, blah, blah, Here's the places to go. We've already checked out these restaurants; these are hot, these are not. And here's things to do. And also they had a poem on the last page of this brochure and I'd heard of it before.

It was basically something about being an artist, being an actor, that it's more than just a job, that it's a lifestyle. There's a lot of love and support in the arts, and I found that kind of compelling. It just felt good, you know? How many jobs do you have in your lifetime where you punch in a clock and you run into a dead end with your boss. Here you had a chance to be expressive and people actually appreciate your efforts. You know some productions are better than others, of course, but I like the aspect of working in conjunction with other people with intelligence and talent. And there are a lot of incredibly talented people in the business.

CM: You really must have a natural talent also, because you're always intense, you're always in the moment on the screen.

MB: Well, you have to make it real.

CM: A lot of people don't have that ability though, to make you believe them. But you certainly do.

MB: Thank you.

CM: Any roles that were particularly gratifying to you?

MB: Oh, sure. I'll start with my absolute favorite role. It was my guest appearance on THE X-FILES as Owen Jarvis, the guardian angel for the boy that the devil's disciple is trying to kill. That meant a lot to me. I even told Chris Carter that I want this part, you won't be sorry. He had to look at a bunch of other actors too, but basically he hired me right on the spot. We just kind of hit it off, you know. He grew up liking to surf. I liked to surf when I was growing up. We liked the same comic books, you know (laughs).

He just seemed to know I was the guy he wanted and he kind of trusted what I was telling him. And he was happy with the results. Probably the next favorite role was — You know, I loved the part of Ellis (in CUCKOO'S NEST) and I didn't get that much in the way of exposure. I didn't have any lines, even though I worked four months on it. I played a part in a movie with Pat Morita that just went straight to video, it was called AUNTIE LEE'S MEAT PIES, and I got to play a real sympathetic kind of simple character, it was kind of a SWEENEY TODD modern version. I was helping him

dispose of the bodies. The girls were chopping them up to make into

MB: Yes. It was originally called PSYOPS. Well, (creator/producer) Will Crawford contacted me on the Internet and we had a reading in Los Angeles with some of the potential investors. It seems to be that it might actually happen. We're hoping that it does. Will is a nice guy. He seems to have a good business savvy. He put this whole thing together over the internet. The first series to do that.

We just started pre-production on my next film, it's called THE STORY TELLER. It's written and produced and directed by Andrew Gheity. And I play the main antagonist, THE CADAVER. That's about all I can tell you but it should be released this fall or next winter. It's a dynamite script. CM: Any dream projects?

MB: Yes, a dream project would probably be next year when I start doing my stand-up comedy. It's not joke-jokes, it's situational, real life comments type of humor.

CM: Anything else?

MB: I'll just add this. Working in the industry has allowed me to be involved in some very wonderful charity organizations. You get invited, you know. They're always looking for people that can be a spokes person or what have you. I've worked with Paul Newman's camp for children with facial birth defects, things of that nature, it's called the Bogue Creek Gang and it is sponsored by Paul Newman, General Schwarzkopf and Arnold Palmer. It's a great, great organization. And I've been involved with many other charitable groups, too. That's one of the nice bonuses. To give something back, you know. ———

## ANDY MILLIGAN

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## RON FORD

Born in Bremerton, Washington, in 1958, Ron received his Drama degree from Olympic College in 1980. While in college he was nominated for the Irene Ryan acting award for his performance as Dodge in Shepard's Buried Child. He wrote a play, Outlaws, which was produced for the American College Theater Festival, and was nominated for the David Library Literary Award. That same year (1983), Ron married the woman who played his wife in the Buried Child in the same theater in which the play was produced. In 1985 they moved to Tucson, Arizona, where Ron worked on the production crew of many motion pictures (including Can't Buy Love and World Gone Wild) in many capacities, from driver to make-up artist.



He got his first professional acting role in the TV series Hey, Dude and The Young Riders. His public access video of Forrest J Ackerman's Lon Chaney story, Letter to an Angel won an award in the American Film Institute's 1985 Visions of U.S. Competition. In 1990 Ron moved

to Los Angeles and has since appeared in dozens of motion pictures. After winning the 1992 Christopher Columbus Screenplay Discovery Award, Ron wrote the 1994 horror hit, The Fear with Vince Edwards, Ann Turkel, and Wes Craven. As a director, Ron helmed his first feature, Alien Force in 1995. Since then he has garnered writing and directing credits in over a dozen feature films.

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**Y**ou've heard it before - the litany of what is wrong with today's horror movies. The gore, the blood, the gratuitous violence! The lack of subtlety and too much sex! The faceless victims you don't care about! You know the drill. Fan magazines and books recycle these complaints until they take on a sacred quality.

The only problem with the mantra is that it isn't really true. There is something very wrong with today's horror movies but the explanation lies elsewhere.

As a first step to enlightenment, there is Tom Johnson's book, *Censored Screams* (McFarland & Company, Publishers), a well-researched study of the British ban of horror films in the 1930s. The power of the movies of the early thirties is brought to life again as though Colin Clive's mad doctor pulled the lever for the first time.

*Censored Screams* recounts how James Whale's two *Frankenstein* films unboxed the guardians of public morality. And there was trouble on both sides of the Atlantic. To audiences of the time the horror pictures from Universal, Paramount, MGM, RKO and the independents were gruesome, violent and sexy.

History repeated itself with another *Frankenstein* picture in the late fifties. Thanks to Hammer and a new medical experimenter, the same old cries of sex and violence were heard yet again. Careful viewers of the earlier and later series noted that not all victims of the monster were fully realized characters. Why, they were sometimes stock characters. Fancy that. If they bled more profusely and in color it didn't change their basic function as cardboard props that screamed on cue.

A more decade later these films would be praised for their restraint when both Hammer and its American counterpart in Gothic fantasy, good old AIP, added still more sex (the nude kind) and violence to the product. Somehow the horror film remained alive (or undead) through all of this decade.

So what has changed? Only that the primary ingredient in a good horror film is largely gone today. Whenever there is hope to see its resurrection, the villagers grab their torches and burn down the nearest windmill.

The villagers in the foregoing example are not the censors with power (Joseph Breen) or without power (Laura "Dr. Laura" Schlesinger). They are now the filmmakers and their audience, eager to throw out the monster with the baptismal water. As Ray Bradbury has often observed, the gargoyles have taken over the cathedral. Rome has fallen and the barbarians are taking meetings.

For those of us who remember the appeal of horror movies for most of the 20th Century - and the reason we collect the things - the point was never sex and violence. We didn't mind the gore. We ogled the sexy heroines. But we never forgot that they were only spice for the stew. If our primary interest had been girls and guts (the literal kind) we could find more in the mainstream thriller genres.

We went to horror films for one reason: **THE HORROR STAR**. Most of today's horror films suck because they have been taken over by the mentality of a teenager who is not a fan! The

# FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE OVERMAN

by Brad  
Linaweaver



Peter Cushing,  
Baron  
Frankenstein,  
Nietzsche,  
and the  
Lamentable Loss  
of the Horror Star

Susan Denberg and Peter Cushing in *Frankenstein Created Woman*

horror, the horror...

Mainstream actors give it a whirl now and again, but that was always true. Barymore in the twenties, March in the thirties, Tracy in the forties, Hopkins today. When a character actor begins to show promise (Pryor, Warner, Nicholson) he does a ton of normal parts before it's too late. When we really have a true genre star all to ourselves, such as the splendid Jeffrey Combs, there is never enough work for him.

Of the old guard, we still have Lee, Gough and Quarry. Thanks to Martin Landau and Tim Burton, Bela Lugosi sort of returned

and won an Oscar.

It ain't the way it used to be. We would go to see a horror star in ANYTHING. You know it's true. We had to see everything Boris Karloff did. And Peter Lorre. And Lionel Atwill. We were the same way about Barbara Steele, one of the few actresses who really had the quality of menace. We sat through the most atrocious movies imaginable for a few minutes with John Carradine. We would brave any amount of boredom for one good scene with George Zucco. Now that's star power! We didn't care if Vincent Price appeared in a film without one drop of blood or if there were gallons

(ULT MOVIES)

splashing around him. We were loyal to him.

We enjoyed Lon Chaney, Jr., so much that we discovered his dad and sat all the way through silent films to have extra time with the Man of a Thousand Faces. Before we knew it, we were trained film historians with no patience for our contemporaries who couldn't enjoy older films.

We had acquired aristocratic tastes. And that leads directly to the ultimate renegade aristocrat of the horror film, the subject of this essay.

Did we only go to see *The Vampire Lovers* for naked breasts and lesbian lust? Pitt would prove her star power in that film, but think back to the real reason we had to see it in the theaters.

We went for Peter Cushing.

If what used to be called horror movies were about the Cult of Personality, and if our attraction was to that special breed of character actor who held court at the very center of our nightmares, then Cushing has a unique claim to fame.

He was the only actor to play a continuing character in a series of films where he did both of the things that horror actors do best: the dynamic villain and the scary hero. But he did both within the context of the same series and the same character! That is unique.

It is surprising that this accomplishment has not been better appreciated. When character actors don't play the villain, they play a very special kind of hero. Basil Rathbone was usually a villain, especially with a sword in his hand, but he was also Sherlock Holmes. When an actor who normally plays heroes tries to do Holmes it never works. Just look at Roger Moore or Charlton Heston.

Peter Cushing was a marvelous Sherlock Holmes.

Now there is nothing unusual about a horror star playing an odd hero. Lorré was Mr. Moto, Karlhoff was Mr. Wong, Lugosi was the prize by playing Chanda the hero in a serial after playing Roxor - Chanda's enemy - in a feature.

But there is nothing else like Cushing's Victor Frankenstein in the six films he made for Hammer. Since horror stars will soon be a thing of the past, his achievement is guaranteed never to be surpassed.

Perhaps his being both hero and villain of the series is not noticed because the moral perspective of the typical writer on films sees him as a villain all the time. Or perhaps it's the corollary of seeing him as an anti-hero all the time. The truth is that he really is the hero of some of the films and the villain in others.

Cushing was the only actor who could pull this off because of his approach to acting. Herewith some proof:

Cushing's nickname on many a set was "Props Peter." We've been told this by so many sources that it must be true. He did everything in his power to bring verisimilitude to his roles. No matter how fantastic the situation, he could invest any scene in which he appeared with a sense of reality. No actor has ever done it better.

He was naturally typecast as an exceptionally intelligent man, combining a graceful physicality with the essence of a focused mind. He was that genuine rarity: a sexy intellectual.

Hammer made several right decisions at the start: hire Cushing and then base the series on his character rather than the monster. Another stroke of genius was casting him as the hero of their first Dracula film. Never did Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee complement each other so well, the perfect yin and yang of a Gothic Christian fantasy. The action climax of *Horror of Dracula* was so exciting and larger than life that it anticipated certain aspects of the James Bond films.

Before looking at Cushing as the hero, it is worth considering his other most famous role (*Star Wars* notwithstanding). He played van Helsing in *Horror of Dracula*, *Bride of Dracula*, *Dracula A.D. 72*, *Satanic Rites of Dracula* and *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires*. That's five times, one less than Baron Frankenstein.

There may well be disagreement with the thesis about to be advanced regarding the hero's peculiar stance on issues of good and evil. But may we at least agree that van Helsing is on the side of the angels when he ventures forth with hammer and stake? The question is worth asking after film critic John McCarty put forth the view that Cushing is the villain of *Horror of Dracula* and Lee's vampire count the helpless pawn of the forces that drive him.

The theory of McCartyism might seem reasonable to an old Nazi clauding someone like Simon Wiesenthal; or to confused teenagers who have been persuaded that sex is evil and therefore choose evil as a strategy to get laid; or maybe to a mental case who really longs to be a vampire! But let us assume that for most of us, van Helsing is a hero. Cushing certainly thought so.

Now comes the hard part. What are we to think of the quintessential mad doctor as essayed by Cushing with many of the same qualities we enjoy in his van Helsing and Holmes? The answer is not simple if we take the Frankenstein series seriously.

Terence Fisher directed five of them. Freddie Francis did one. Just as important are the men who wrote them.

*Curse of Frankenstein* was scripted by Jimmy Sangster for a 1956 production.

*The Revenge of Frankenstein* was scripted by Jimmy Sangster with additional dialogue by H. Huford Jones for a 1958 production.

*The Evil of Frankenstein* was scripted by Anthony Hinds (writing as John Elder) for the one directed by Francis in 1963.

*Frankenstein Created Woman* was scripted by John Elder for a 1967 production.

*Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* was scripted by Bert Batt and Anthony Nelson-Keys for a 1969 production.

*Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* was scripted by John Elder for the final installment in 1972.

The character of Victor Frankenstein as imagined by John Elder is a significantly dif-

ferent character from the friend in the script by Batt and Nelson-Keys or the initial outing by Jimmy Sangster. But weirdly, Elder's Frankenstein has much in common with the second Sangster script.

There are two possibilities.

The first is that this is the same person despite problems in story continuity. He behaves well or badly depending on circumstances. The second possibility (the author's choice) is that he really is a different person as the scripts explore varying moral perspectives on the same basic theme. Either way, we have something unique in a commercial film series: a hero/anti-hero/ villain who forces us to be philosophers in the Age of Science (in-between the poppers and heavy petting).

The most obvious philosophical influence on this series is courtesy of the thinker who made the following observations:

"Knowledge for its own sake - that is the last snare laid by morality; we are thereby completely entangled in morals once more."

"The charm of knowledge would be small, were it not so much shame has to be overcome on the way to it."

"He who attains his ideal, precisely thereby surpasses it."

"So cold, so icy, that one burns one's fingers on the touch of him! Every hand that lays hold of him shrinks back! - And for that very reason many think him red-hot."

"In the eyes of all true women science is hostile to the sense of shame. They feel as if one wished to creep under their skin with it - or worse still - under their dress and finery."

"What a person is begins to betray itself when his talent decreases - when he ceases to show what he can do."

"He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee."

"Man is a rope tied between the ape and superman."

Of course, Peter Cushing's Baron Frankenstein is busily engaged in trying to create the superman - or better translated, the Overman - of Friedrich Nietzsche. The irony is that Cushing's Baron is already there. He is the Overman himself (as recognized in *The Revenge of Frankenstein*).

"Props Peter" must have been in heaven with the toys provided by the creative team at Hammer. They must have had as much fun as Kenneth Strickfaden had in his *Universal* days. Except for *Evil* (where they consciously copied the set-up from *Whale's The Bride of Frankenstein*) the Hammer machinery is a delight of Victorian high-tech, owing more to Jules Verne than to Mary Shelley. But at least Frankenstein's literary mother did set the tone with references to Galvanism.

For one person to invent all this stuff and accomplish what he does, Baron Frankenstein is a bit more than a medical experimenter. He is the greatest genius who ever lived. He is not just practicing 20th Century science in the 19th Century. He is way ahead of us!! He not only is the living proof that all the old-fashioned



views of his own time are false; he is a reproach to the timidity of today's Scientific priesthood that assures us that the day of the lone genius is dead.

Add to Frankenstein's arrogance some healthy doses of aristocracy, male chauvinism, materialism and worst of all, snobbery, and you see why he is a character that neither the vulgar left nor right can stomach. Who the hell does he think he is? Does he think he's better than we are?

Of course he is.

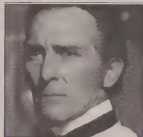
Terence Fisher was the right choice for these films because he cared about all the characters that meant nothing to Frankenstein. The movies are a war between the baron's cold intellect and Fisher's romantic emotions.

The best critical study of Fisher is probably the relevant chapter in Paul M. Jensen's *The Men Who Made the Monsters* (Twayne). There's also much to recommend in David Pirie's *A Heritage of Horror* (Avon), the yearman work by Tom Johnson and Deborah Del Vecchio for McFarland and any issue of *Little Shoppe of Horrors*. By now, one of van Helsing's stakes has been driven through the dismissal of Fisher in Carlos Clares's *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*.

In common with Alfred Hitchcock, Fisher is at his best when dealing with guilt and the transference of guilt. Both men explore the dark side of Romanticism, effectively portraying relations between the sexes as anything but peaceful. They are especially gifted at combining the grotesque and the beautiful - and exploring the truly strange ways in which people work out their emotional needs for one another.

Perhaps it is surprising that one of Fisher's greatest successes revolves around a character who is at war with human emotion, whether achieving good or ill in a given plot. Of all characters in his films, Frankenstein is the most emotionally self-sufficient. Even Dracula wants to seduce his victims. They are still subjects underneath his fangs. Underneath Frankenstein's scalp, human beings become objects.

When Fisher said that he didn't much care for his science fiction films, he was referring to the ones with contemporary settings: *The Earth Dies Screaming*, *Island of Terror* and *Night of the Big Heat*. He probably didn't think of the Frankenstein films as sci-fi. But they



are Frankenstein stories are science fiction horror every bit as much as Dracula stories are supernatural horror. Period costumes have nothing to do with it.

Even when Cushing's mad doctor character is a brutal bastard, he is a symbol of progress. But when his character is not being a thug, he achieves far more. Those who insist that Frankenstein is a villain in all six films are focusing too much on the character's emotional repression and obsessive dedication rather than paying attention to the choices he makes.

Fisher's style is consistent throughout the series. So is Cushing's. Between the two of them, Baron Frankenstein projects a coldness that can give a typical audience frostbite. That's where the confusion arises about how to separate the heroic wheat from the villainous chaff.

In *The Curse of Frankenstein*, Cushing plays a very bad man. He murders an elderly professor so he can make use of the poor fellow's brain. He arranges for his maid to be raped and murdered by his monster when she threatens a wee bit of blackmail. These genuine crimes are mixed in with perfectly reasonable behavior - attempting to play God and advance the cause of science. Oh, and he shoots lovely Hazel Court, but that's an accident. He's not that crazy!

There is little doubt that the world in which the bad Baron lives would be more upset about his breaking the laws of God than his wholesale violation of human rights. So to hell with them.

The real question is can the audience in the theatre make these distinctions? Can the critics and other defenders of public morality? Here we have the spectacle of mass entertainment questioning the virtues of the masses. No wonder that this film was considered reprehensible. It had nothing to do with blood or severed limbs.

The next installment is one of the bravest films ever made. When *Curse* made huge profits, a sequel was inevitable but no one had reason to expect such a marked increase in quality.

*The Revenge of Frankenstein* starts off where the other movie left off. The baron is marched up to the guillotine. We hear a scuffle but don't see what happens. Much later we learn that the officiating priest was executed in Frankenstein's place. Which means that the

film begins with an incident worthy of the previous film's ruthlessness? The good baron has murdered or participated in murder. But this time it's at least in self defense. Maybe the priest refused to be bribed.

The priest must not have been very popular if the town never noticed his absence.

At any rate, the rest of the story breaks fundamentally with what has gone before. The baron doesn't murder anyone else. (Accidentally frightening a grave robber with a bad heart doesn't count.) In fact, he helps a lot of people.

The plot really begins when he sets up a medical practice in a community where he is unknown. Working tirelessly under an assumed name, his competence soon makes him the most popular doctor in the area. A committee of fellow surgeons (sort of an embryonic AMA) attempts forcing him to join their organization.

The baron makes a speech worthy of Ayn Rand except that it is brief. He points out that he has achieved what he has without any help from them and that he prefers working alone. The result is a predictable orgy of envy.

As for the "monster" he creates this time around, he has promised his crippled assistant that he will transplant the man's perfectly good brain into a handsome young body. This Adonis has been pieced together from the leftovers of a charity clinic at which Frankenstein performs medical services without a cash charge. He takes his payment another way. There may be some question as to the doc being a little too eager when it comes to amputations, but his new assistant (Francis Matthews) seems an ethical sort who would frown on that sort of thing. We must also consider what would be happening to these patients without Frankenstein's intervention.

Meanwhile, our hero's regular practice is such as to bring him the wealthiest patients in town and so the means to outfit his secret laboratory. Everything is in his favor, for a change, and he may be on the way to creating the Overman.

The most significant shift in Frankenstein's attitude from the first film is that now there is no doubt that he is concerned for the success of his patient. Yeah, he's still a bit cold and wants to show the guy off to an admiring world without bothering to first ask permission. No one said the doc is perfect.

*Revenge* is a far more serious film than *Curse*. The baron becomes more sarcastic but less nasty. He is fighting for the future - for us, actually. The baron in *Revenge* has an affinity with his portrayal of Dr. Knox in John Gilling's *The Flesh and the Friends* (AKA, *Mama*) released in 1959. Dr. Knox sums it up: "Ah yes, Parliament! With 500 walking corpses there, you'd think they could spare one!"

Alas, *Revenge* demonstrates that no matter how carefully a scientist makes his plans in a horror film, the box office will have the last word. Bad psychology and an unforeseen beating from a stupid night watchman transforms the baron's greatest achievement into a cannibalistic monster. Our hero has been defeated by



bad luck or in his own immortal words, by "interfering women."

Of course, he is misogynistic. He has to be. The logic of the situation is inescapable: a reversal of the feminist fantasy of rendering man biologically superfluous. Throughout the series, women seem to unconsciously sense that if Frankenstein is a success they will lose their function. So they throw a monkey-wrench into the works.

Interestingly, the woman doing the interfering in *Revenge* is Eunice Gayson, James Bond's first onscreen lover (*Dr. No*, 1962). By trying to do good around Frankenstein's free clinic, she inadvertently turns a happy story back into a horror story. Just like real life.

The baron in this incarnation would never hurt her. But he is annoyed in a stiff upper lip manner that is a joy to behold. This time we like him enough to root for his victory at the end when he becomes his own creation, the Overman at last.

The next film has a reputation for not being a joy to behold. The critical consensus places *The Evil of Frankenstein* at the bottom of the series. Lately there has been a reappraisal of the picture but it is unlikely that what Freddie Francis did with Cushing's baron will ever be regarded as kindly as his handling of Lee's vampire in *Dracula has Risen from the Grave* (1969).

There is a perverse pleasure in seeing *Evil* as a missing installment of the old Universal series. Although the lab owes much to the budgets of the 1930s the rest is pure 1960s assembly line. It's almost a fun exercise in would it would have been like to see Cushing in those other films. Director Fred Olen Ray (who made *Billy Frankenstein*) likes it even though it gives more monster than all the other films put together.

When one gets past the stumbling block (of ice) that the Hammer team did not handle this sort of material as well as a Hollywood studio there is still much to enjoy. Cushing's character is written and played at a level equal to the rest of the series. For the first time there is absolutely no question that he is the hero in a film proclaiming his "evil" in the title!

The only evil here is body snatching in a society that is superstitious and dirt ignorant. The modern audience quickly identifies with his scientific goals and appreciates how Frankenstein is at pains not to violate the rights of the living (other than his usual unconcern for family burial rituals).

This time the assistant (Sandor Elès) is in even greater awe than his predecessor, Francis Matthews, a tall order. The script invites us to share in this assessment. The loyal assistant as someone with whom we can identify (unlike mad Fritz in the original Karloff version) is the crucial ingredient that places the Francis film squarely in the sequence begun by Fisher's *Revenge* and culminating with *Frankenstein Created Woman*. This element has been sadly overlooked by various commentators; and it is this element that provides a way to take *The Evil of Frankenstein* seriously.

We are still searching for the Overman.

Too bad that we find Kiwi Kingston instead. Well, at least he helps us better appreciate both Chaney, Jr., and Strange in the Monster's Universal boots.

When the new assistant compliments his master that he knows everything, Cushing's expression and pause makes the delivery of his line a fine art: "Not everything." Cushing is as self assured as he was in *Revenge*, and just as ethical. French maids won't have to worry about him this time — nor will elderly professors need concern themselves about their gray matter.

The prologue is a miniature story all to itself, existing primarily for the exchange between our hero and an annoying priest. The best moment comes when Frankenstein informs the man of the cloth that he is trespassing. Were this representative of God as intelligent as Cushing's own interpretation of van Helsing, the priest would simply argue that Frankenstein trespassed first when he hired a body snatcher to violate the rights of a family in the village.

Well, this priest is no Father Brown. Instead, he resorts to violence and destroys the heart Frankenstein has brought back to life, leading our hero to lament how "they" always destroy everything. It's like a scene between Nietzsche's Zarathustra and the village idiot.

The scene fits in quite nicely with the Fisher series. However, it's not long before the true evil of this picture becomes apparent as it suffers from a routine plot. At least we have an interesting battle of wits between Cushing and another good character actor, Peter Woodthorpe as a wicked carnival hypnotist.

For added spice, Cushing contributes to some nice stunts. Escaping from upstairs bedroom windows and swinging across labyrinths with a length of chain provides more thrills than anything the monster does. Cushing said they were treating the baron like James Bond but there was a closer example to hand: his own portrayal of van Helsing! That was really the first time we appreciated the Errol Flynn qualities of Peter Cushing.

Yet it is Francis who first directs the more athletic baron and this sets the tone for the remaining Fisher entries. Even as late as *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, David Prowse was impressed by the stunts the much older Cushing insisted on performing himself (such as when he leaps on the monster

and chloroforms him). Maybe Francis deserves a bit more credit than he has received up to now.

True, Cushing took his lumps in the original *Curse*, but falling head against a wall is not the same as the later physically. We first got the idea of what Cushing could do with the climax from Fisher's *Horror of Dracula*.

Fisher returned to Hammer's most interesting series for one of the most unusual films that Hammer ever produced. Along with *Quatermass and the Pit* and *The Devil Rides Out*, *Frankenstein Created Woman* occupies that strange region where human reason encounters evidence of the supernatural so tangible that no faith is required to believe in an ever mounting series of miraculous events.

The layers of the onion are peeled and each time we find that everything we know is wrong.

Playboy model Susan Denberg has the best role of her tragically short career. Thorley Walters has the best role of his rich and long career. Fisher reclaimed the series with a vengeance inspiring a lukewarm recommendation from *Critic of Frankenstein* magazine to see it because "it's better than *Evil*" (faint praise after *Colt* thrashed *Evil*).

From this point on, the films were ahead of their times in varying degrees.

Cushing is so good in this film that hardly any contemporary critic noticed. They were thrown off by the style of a Fairy Tale. The film begins with an execution by guillotine so that we feel we are in the right theater but what is missing is a voice intoning, "Once upon a time..."

Writing in *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, Richard Klemensen gets it exactly right: "A very good film and my personal favorite of the Frankenstein series. The teaming of Cushing and Thorley Walters was excellent as they play off each other in a sort of Holmes/Watson way. Some of the cleverest and wittiest lines ever heard in a Frankenstein film are used here. Frankenstein is a bit of a smart-ass and it plays well."

When the inspector asks the baron if he takes the villagers and the constabulary for fools, Cushing answers, "Yes." A moment later he is doing a nice bit of physical action as he escapes the fools. They cannot countenance an intellectual who runs fast and makes graceful exits from upstairs windows.





In the marvelous courtroom sequence, Frankenstein thumbs through the Bible a bit disdainfully instead of swearing on it. Yet here we have a story line where he proves the physical existence of the soul, and therefore lends some credibility to the Bible! But obviously the book in his hand is an incomplete and error-ridden map for the terrain he is traversing in fact. By transplanting souls instead of brains, he proves that the mind and personality are not ultimately dependent on the brain.

In the courtroom scene, the prosecutor is operating on the old discredited view that criminal tendencies can be passed on genetically -- "like father, like son." Frankenstein seems to share our modern disdain for this quaint notion but then subscribes to an even more discredited belief, reminding us that he is as different from us as he is from the villagers.

"So you think you can tell a murderer by just looking at him?" asks the prosecutor.

Cushing takes a long look at the man before answering, "Yes."

"I protest!" replies the officer of the court.

Nineteenth century scientists thought it might be possible to detect the criminal type from physical appearance. They were also more likely to believe in the soul than today's scientists. This is a most unusual movie.

We arrive at last at ground zero of why so many critics and fans think Hammer's Baron Frankenstein is always a villain. He is not remotely like a modern day liberal.

What other explanation is there for not being able to distinguish the psychotic killer of *Curse* (and the next in the series) from the perfectly sane benefactor of humanity in this film? Whether he is using Veresque equipment to draw geo-thermal energy from the Earth or persuading a rich young hooligan to pay for emergency medical aid so that he and his doctor assistant/friend may dine well, there is not one damned thing that Frankenstein does in this story that is wrong by any rational code of morality.

He even attains bodies legally!!!

Thanks to his experiments, justice is meted out to three thorough going bastards responsible for one murder, one frame-up execution (another murder) and a suicide. Plus they are so blind that they can't see what a beautiful girl Denberg is even with messy hair, a bad leg and a birth defect on one side of her face. They should be chopped up for that alone.

With two dead young lovers on his hands, victims of the bastards, Frankenstein performs miracle after miracle. He repairs the imperfections in Denberg's body and makes her a blonde so that Helmer will approve. Then he transplants the soul of her dead boyfriend into her body so that she has two minds in her. In other words, the mad scientist achieves what religion is always promising: the union of perfect lovers after death.

She/they carry out revenge on the true villains of the film. Frankenstein is not aware of this initially but when he finds out about it

he even tries to put a stop to it -- not because he cares about the bastards but because he is concerned for the welfare of his experiment.

When Thorley Walters tells Denberg that Frankenstein is a wonderful man, he's telling the truth. Any rational person in the audience must agree. And although no one says it in the film, the script contrasts the best of aristocracy (Cushing) with the worst (the three scoundrels).

As in *Revenge*, Cushing's character is also ready and willing to subject himself to his own experiments. He is in suspended animation when we first see him. This is quite different from many mad scientists who would never dream of putting themselves at risk.

Here, more than any other film in the series, it is evident that at some primitive level we hate Baron Frankenstein because he is superior to us. He is the Overman.

After this refreshing elitist revolution against the masses, the next film returns us to more familiar territory. *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* is ahead of its time only in foreshadowing the slaughter-fests of forthcoming horror movie series. More important for *FMBD* was how it provides a viewpoint more palatable to modern day sensibilities than the previous story.

Someone who is better than we are is a menace to society. He must be a criminal at heart. Given half a chance he'll murder and rape and force women to make him coffee.

The best thing about this film is that cinematically it is a masterpiece. And once the

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viewer realizes that everyone in the story is basically a rotter or a nitwit, it becomes a lot of fun. This one has some of the same anti-social qualities of those old Lugosi films for Monogram and PRC where you don't really mind that the main character is killing off the rest of the cast. May be there's even foreshadowing of *Dr. Phibes* except that there's more humor in the Phibes films.

Fisher was never better than in this crazy murder spree. Along with his first Dracula and *The Devil Rides Out*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* contains his best work. All his emotional and cinematic values are calling the shots.

As for those of us who want to cheer for the baron (spoiled as we were by the previous three story-lines) this grim outing provides us exactly one scene. We all know it.

After listening to a pompous display of ignorance at which the British excel, the baron says a few words:

"Excuse me, I didn't know that you were doctors."

"Doctors?" blusters one of his fellow lodgers. "We're not doctors."

Cushing relishes the next line: "I beg your pardon. I thought you knew what you were talking about."

He follows up with a marvelous speech about fools who block progress and almost makes the audience forget that his road to the future requires looting off heads from living people and blackmailing gorgeous Veronica Carlson.

Before he's done, he'll turn Carlson's boyfriend into a murderer, rape her (depending on which version you see) and stab her to death with a scalpel -- but not before subjecting her to sexist remarks. The fiend!

He does have a wealth of great lines, though. The clever dialogue partly makes up for this being a throw-back to *The Curse of Frankenstein*. Only this time he is far more efficient. He destroys so many people that you forget that the title of the film refers to his own imminent destruction.

As he's taken into a burning building in the last shot, one is tempted to say: "Is that all?" We have seen him survive fires before.

The most disturbing aspect of the story is in the character of Dr. Brandt, his colleague who attempts to destroy Frankenstein. Once this man's brain has been cured of insanity and transplanted into the very fine character actor Freddie Jones, he behaves so irrationally that we know he is "sane" by the standards of conventional society. He doesn't appreciate what the baron has done for him.

The problem is that Brandt can't know about all the hideous crimes Frankenstein has perpetrated to reach this point. We in the audience know because we have been watching the movie. But Brandt hasn't been watching the movie with us so that makes his behavior a bit ungrateful to say the least. He doesn't even appreciate Frankenstein's puckish sense of humor -- transplanting Brandt's brain into the body of one of his and Frankenstein's critics. There's no pleasing some people.

I mean, Brandt doesn't know that Frankenstein murdered the Freddie Jones character. He doesn't even bother asking to find out if Frankenstein has some lame story. Like the script of this film.

Intellectually, this film falls below *The Evil of Frankenstein*. Emotionally, there is hardly a better horror film anywhere. A lot of people find it hard to enjoy. They aren't watching in the right spirit. You need to root for Cushing to kill off everyone in sight and then the film is a hoot.

The opening sequences -- a beautifully choreographed routine for attaining and then having fun with a severed head -- ranks with the climax of *Horror of Dracula*. Cushing is wonderful. He is the action star of horror films.

*Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* also provides the best closing joke of any Hammer film, but one that is easy to miss. The plodding inspector played by Thorley Walters is really bad at his job, far worse than Le Strade in the Universal Holmes series. About mid-way through the story, Cushing tells his unfortunate assistant (Simon Ward who doesn't admire the baron at all) that the police "aren't utter fools."

In most movies he'd be right. Not in this one! The coppers never solve a thing.

So at last we arrive at the last time Peter Cushing played the role for which he will always be remembered. Hammer sure made the right choice doing a series about the scientist instead of the Karloff monster whom they could never hope to match.

Colin Clive was quite good in the two Whale films. But his performance was somewhat limited and very much of the period in which the films were made. To do Mary Shelley's character in period was the role of a lifetime for Cushing.

As Hazel Court said, "He was a very kind man -- so gentle ... He also had an aura of mystery -- a side you never quite got to. He was really born out of his time. With his beautiful manners and movements, he was a man of the nineteenth century."

Forrest J Ackerman coined the phrase *St. Peter* to describe a man who was so pleasant and affable in real life while adept at portraying methodical villains and ruthless heroes. Interestingly, Cushing may have been one of the few actors to portray a vampire hunter who was a real life believing Christian.

When playing the atheistic materialist Baron Frankenstein, Cushing gave this product of the Enlightenment his very best efforts. He understood that the mad scientist of popular fiction is a kind of priest but he serves different gods than the one Cushing actually worshipped on Sundays.

Did he know that *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* would be his last time? Who can say? Most reviewers were unkind to this one. They couldn't get past the Irishish costume worn by David Lewison. A few recognized parallels to Val Lewton's brilliant Karloff film, *Reddon*. Largely, the consensus was that Hammer had gone stale.

Not so! *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* provides a fitting coda to the series. Cinematically inferior to the cold, polished surfaces of the previous film, this claustrophobic tale asks disturbing questions and makes us think again.

At the end of the series, Fisher has a worthy script in which the two aspects of the Frankenstein character, or the two characters, finally merge. As doctor of the asylum, he gives better care to his patients (when he is actually a fellow inmate) than they could possibly receive from anyone else. He stands against the sexual exploitation of women by the director of the asylum when that pathetic little man takes advantage of his position.

And yet Frankenstein is perfectly willing to arrange what would most certainly be the rape of a girl (Madeline Smith) who has been his faithful assistant just so his monster may reproduce. He abuses his position by making certain that a mentally unstable patient will see a report pronouncing him incurable so that the poor man will be driven to suicide. Frankenstein wants the benefit of his victim's genius in the head of his new creation -- and then expects this abused mind to adjust to its new circumstances with perfect sanity. But through all this he is attempting to cure the man's madness.

No wonder Frankenstein finds time in this film to laugh at some really vulgar jokes. Why, he must be insane!

This last installment provides us with another admiring assistant and student (they all want to learn so very much) essayed by Shane Briant. He brings a touch of decadence to the part. As he begins to question the morality of what he is abetting, he connects with the decadence of the modern world. He connects with us.

As Briant's character is forced to make difficult moral choices, so are we. Our future will be one of genetic engineering and new biological sciences. At last the subject of man is man in a way that puts all the Dr. Frankensteins permanently upon the throne of God. They are building a world in which the beliefs of everyone will be challenged to the core.

Are we in an asylum of our own construction? Will we continue amusing ourselves until the Overman replaces us? The philosopher who dreamed of the Overman also worried about wrong paths to that goal -- paths strung with barbed wire finally leading to mass murder in the name of eugenics. The 20th Century would have been less of a nightmare if more people had been able to read.

As we slide into a new century, we know that reading skills have deteriorated. We don't consider the danger. We think that if we are truly frightened, we can grab our torches and march on the castle. But we have forgotten what Kafka tried to teach us: we will never reach the castle.

So we may as well be as comfortable as possible in the asylum. If we are fortunate, the doctor will make house calls.

He may not be a saint but perhaps he will be kind.

# "Adventures of an Ultra Fab Prof:

## Terry Southern at Columbia University" by CHARLES ZIGMAN



Terry Southern probably about sixty-eight years old

Photo Courtesy of Nile Southern, Estate of Terry Southern



Young Terry Southern

Photo Courtesy of Nile Southern, Estate of Terry Southern

Terry Southern, who passed away in 1995, is the Father of Contemporary Black Comedy. Period. And if you don't like it -- or if you don't agree with it -- then I can't help you out, because it happens to be true.

Terry was the peerless genius without whom there would be no *Saturday Night Live*; no *National Lampoon*; and probably even no Howard Stern. Beginning in the 1950's, he wrote, or co-authored some of the sharpest black comedy of our time, in both film (*Dr. Strangelove*, *Easy Rider*) and literature. He first gained notoriety from his novel *Candy*, an hilarious satire of porn that some people misconstrued to be actual porn itself (Terry's irony was so subtle, it was frequently misunderstood.) He was an admired part of an ultra-cool pantheon of counter-culture denizens who included his pals Bill Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg.

But then, suddenly, starting in the seventies, something happened to Terry -- or, more accurately, nothing happened. The world, for the most part, stopped requiring his unique services as hipster laureate. It's not that he stopped writing; he didn't. His counter-culture style, so popular in the turbulent sixties, could no longer find a home in a 1980s-1990s world where, increasingly, there was no counter-culture, and in which even the most liberal of people had become "establishment." (Terry spent these years writing many great screenplays which never came to fruition, due to the vagaries of the film industry.) So, for the most part, Terry just lived out his last twenty years quietly. Nobody knew what became of him, and almost nobody asked... except, Thank God, for the Columbia University Graduate Department of Film.

I was amazed to find, on that morning in the Spring of 1991, that the famously

reclusive Terry Southern would be teaching the Wednesday afternoon screenwriting course I had signed up for Columbia University. I became fortunate enough to know this writer, whose literature and films I had enjoyed from the time I was very young, for the last four years of his life.

## Terry is on the cover of the Sgt. Pepper album (he's the guy in the shades, in the vortex between Edgar Allen Poe and Lenny Bruce!!!!)

And I'm happy to report that this 'grand guy' was sharp and hilarious, right up until the very end.

"JOAN OF ARC WEDNESDAY." Writing class. One of our more earnest classmates stands up. She reads the class a short screenplay she has written-- a feminist retake on the Joan of Arc legend, featuring Joan and her same-sex lover. This student prattles on for upwards of half an hour. We, her peers, are supposed to listen to this incredible boorishness, and to make comments when she is finished. But she is just so incredibly boring, that we are all dropping off like flies. People who are not wearing watches start, absently, checking their arms. When the student finishes laying down her never-ending monologue, she gazes at the class triumphantly; ready for the admiration that she knows she deserves.

She asks us, "What did you think?"

Terry, who has been nodding off during

the reading, answers gracefully: "Why don't they just get stoned and fuck?"

The young woman runs out of the classroom, never to return. Our whole class takes Terry out for a well-deserved beer.

To borrow a phrase from the beginning of Terry's novel *Blue Movie*,

Now dig this...

Fall 1991. Orientation day for the new semester arrives. All of the teachers congregate on stage, pontificating wildly about what their courses will involve. Most of these professors have never worked in the film biz

proper (one guy edited an episode of "Sea Hunt"), so this assortment of intimidated students is probably the largest audience most of them will probably ever get. I notice, as I listen to these teachers droning on incessantly, that the mythic Terry Southern is nowhere in sight; his chair, on stage, is unoccupied. Moments later, Southern is introduced... but where is he?

In the front row of the audience, hidden anonymously among the students, an unassuming gentleman stands, wearing a simple (and food-stained) work shirt. This is Terry Southern. Staring at his shoes, shyly, he lays out his whole plan for the semester: "I just want to help people write screenplays." Then he sits down again, as fast as he can. He's too fraul-looking, obviously, to make the Everest-like climb up to the stage.

Days later, when Terry arrives in our classroom for the first time (always out-of-breath for the first few moments), he thanks

us graciously, and we assist him in placing his cane against the wall and getting himself seated. This is not the, dark-haired, Ray-Ban-wearing, swingin' sixties Terry Southern immortalized by the Beatles on the jacket of the "Sergeant Pepper" album. (Southern was Ringo's favorite author.) The Terry Southern in our classroom is the rumpled model, twenty-five years hence. He's obviously teaching just because he "needs the bread," although he doesn't let on about it in words (although he'll admit his poverty to a couple of us much later) — but we know the score, nevertheless, because his tweed jackets and shirts are old and stained. He is sixty-eight, although he appears to be ten years older, due to many years of mistreatment at the hands of a Hollywood that has shunned him, and also to the fact that he has steadily mistreated himself over time — even admitting to us, when our class went out for a beer after class, that he's "just an old drinker." The Terry's in our class has weathered strokes, heart attacks, stomach surgeries, you name it.

The irony of the brand-name on this always tired-looking guy's backpack — the label reads, "Active Sack" (!) — is not lost on him; Terry always takes pleasure in showing us the label, instantly becoming years younger as laughter lights up his face. He relishes the attention that our class pays to him. We realize — even if the majority of the world seems to have (somehow) gone out without him — that we are more than lucky to be in his presence.

What was Terry Southern like in class? Well, he was absolutely like Guy Grand, the main character of his absurdist novel "The Magic Christian," always gleefully 'putting everybody on,' (as he always said) — but always good-naturedly so, and with no offense intended. While he didn't exactly teach screenwriting in the strictest sense of the word (he never, for example, lectured about "story structure"), he would take students' screenplays home in his Active Sack and make really copious — and hilarious — handwritten notes on them, most of them on yellow post-it notes. (In a screenplay I wrote in his class, a transvestite prostitute asks an aroused client, "Want to smell my lassy feet?" Terry crossed out my too-innocuous line, and replaced it with the even more mellifluous-sounding, "Want to shit on top of my head?")

All of Terry's students got nicknames—usually a monosyllabic version of our real names. So, for example, a student named Evan became "Ev," 'Colin' was 'Col'; a fat guy named Marco became "Big Marco"; and on and on. And, as far as my name was concerned—since 'Chuck' was already one syllable—I became an amalgamation of all of my names plus my nickname: ("Hello, is Charles 'Chuck' Zigman there?" Terry would ask, when he once rang me up.)

Sometimes, Terry would absently doodle on one of his omnipresent yellow legal pads, while students read their script

pages aloud. I pilfered one of the drawings he had generated — for posterity, of course — and, while I can't make out exactly what's happening in the sketch, to this day, Terry at least had the good sense to entitle it, "Gus and the Doll." Terry would also smack his dry lips many times during an average class session, which — in my nice Jewish boy naïveté—I would later learn to be classic dry mouth. (He would have a few beers between classes quite often and we, his students, would sometimes bring him some Heinekens, becoming his most dedicated ennablers.)

On other and other Wednesday afternoons, when lazy students didn't bring in any script pages to read, Terry screened videos of his old films: We watched his funeral industry satire, "The Loved One" right along with him, as well as "Dr. Strangelove." He really beamed when we laughed at the films. He carried these videos in said 'Active Sack,' for just such an eventuality. (he would say.) Terry even showed us a short film that some young filmmakers at another college had recently fashioned out of one of his short stories, "You've Gotta Leave Your Mark." He seemed to be as proud of this little student film as he would have been if it had been a major studio film — which is something that we found to be very poignant. You see, T.S. had been disappointed by movie industry people for so long, that he was excited whenever someone was interested in filming his work at all, whether it was Twentieth Century Fox or Twenty Worshepful Film Students. And that was the cool thing about Terry — that even though he wrote this very black comedy — he was always modest and self-deprecating.

One Saturday, Terry happened to be appearing at a Greenwich Village coffee klatch, reading some of his old short stories, in tandem with Allen Ginsberg, who was reading poetry. He didn't bother to tell his students about it.

"Terry, why didn't you tell us you were doing a reading?" we asked him. "We would have come to see you."

Modestly, he mumbled, "Oh, you wouldn't have wanted to waste your time with that. It was nothing." He was always diminishing his accomplishments like that.

(And The Modesty Goes On: Terry found out, in his third semester with us, that he would only be teaching a "beginning screenwriting class," in the upcoming semester, and that he would no longer be able to have us — his 'advanced' students — in class anymore. He wanted to have our class back for another semester, but was too shy to go and find out if this was a possibility — so he asked a few of us if we would go down to the administrator's office with him to help plead his case. We did, and it worked.)

Anecdotes about Terry Southern at Columbia are legion and, recently, many of his ex-students gathered to recount our favorite "Terry stories." I have compiled a "top twelve list" of the most bizarre ones;

these are odd incidents, all, and each one seems to be right out of a Southern novel or film. In no particular order:

1.) "INNOCUOUS HARRASSMENT DAY." An attractive brunette in our class asked if she could meet Terry later for a consultation about her new screenplay, since she was on her way to the gym for an aerobics class. Terry perked up, immediately — obviously imagining the girl's shower room — and inquired, "Can I look through the keyhole?" (Terry's female students would never get mad at him when he occasionally uttered 'dirty old man stuff,' because everyone knew that he was just playing on the conventions of being a dirty old man more than he was actually being a real-life dirty old man—even though he was definitely both (in the best sense of the word).)

2.) "BATHROOM FUN DAY." On this day that will live in infamy, Terry dismissed himself from class and departed for the men's room. He emerged five minutes later, grinning lopsidedly. A few other students and I went in there on a reconnaissance mission, to discover that Terry had drawn a huge penis on the bathroom wall in black ink. Underneath, he scrawled, "Let's all dive into some ultra-fab cili!" We confronted our brazen teacher.

"Hey, Terry, did you just write on the bathroom wall?" we asked.

"Oh, Good Lord, no," he said. (Terry had the coolest speaking voice. In spite of being raised in Texas, he had bewilderingly cultivated a strange British accent.)

3.) "TRES GAY DAY." Terry cancelled our class one Wednesday, so that we could all go into our student screening room and catch "Swoon," a new gay-independent film version of the Leopold and Loeb story, which had originally been popularized in Richard Fleischer's 1959 flick, "Compulsion."

"Film in Room 511," Terry told us excitedly. "Let's all fly to Room 511!" Terry chuckled all the way through the homoerotic flick. During the movie, he leaned over to anyone who could hear and whispered, "This is tres gay, no?"

4.) "GEORGE BUSH HOLOGRAM DAY." 2:00am. Terry called me up during the rebroadcast of a George Bush press conference, not realizing how late it was. I didn't pick up, so he told my answering machine that George Bush did not exist — that the President was, in fact, merely a hologram being projected from some kind of combination mental hospital/observatory, high atop a mountain! (One can only imagine what Terry would have said about Bush, Je!)

5.) "MIRACLE IN MONTAUK." DAY: Once, our whole class decided to write a "group screenplay," each person churning out five pages until it was finished. We called it "Miracle in Montauk." On the last day of class, Terry turned in his five pages of "Montauk" (the script no longer exists), which were awesome — even though they had nothing

to do with the story we were telling:

"How's your ultra-fab clit hanging?" one lesbian (!) asks another at the beginning of Terry's pages.

"Hanging?" the other lesbian replies. How's it hanging? Glumming in the sun, maybe. Shimmering, yes, granted. I'll give you that. But hanging, never."

After Terry read that to us, we were silent. There can be no words to follow something like that up properly.

6.) "HEROIN DAY": One student in our writing class was in the hospital, and Terry wrote her a very sweet letter, making sure that she was "in fine form and fettle." He recounted to her the fact that he, himself, had been in the hospital on numerous occasions, and that the nurses would always give him a tray so he would have something to write on. He also sent the same student a postcard, which addressed a problem he thought that I may have had: Apparently, because I was so quiet in Terry's class for the first several weeks, he mistook my silent awe of him for drug addiction! The picture on the postcard Terry sent the hospitalized girl, was that of an anthropomorphized hypodermic needle - it had legs and a happy face - being chased by two cherub-like children. On the reverse of the card, Terry scrawled a terse note: "GET ZIGMAN OFF HEROIN! FROM A CONCERNED FRIEND, IN EAST CANAAN, CONNECTICUT."

7.) "THE AMAZING DISAPPEARING SCRIFTS DAY": It's a Spring day, and Terry has come up to Columbia, looking really depressed. He's afraid to look anybody in the eye, and I'm sitting on a bench reading, when he shuffles by, staring down at his shoes.

"What's wrong, Terry?" I ask him.

"Man, I just had a heavy scene," he says, stopping in his tracks, looking guilty.

"What happened?"

Apparently, on Terry's way up to Columbia in a cab - he made the journey by himself that day and not with his wife, Gail, as he usually did - he had lost our entire class's screenplays in a cab. We all assured him that it was okay. He looked really relieved.

8.) "KEYHOLE DAY": Terry couldn't get into his classroom to teach his 1:00pm course. The door was locked, because the class that was in there before hadn't let out yet. He freaked.

"What's going on in there," I asked.

Terry peered through the keyhole and then offered me a relatively simple explanation:

"Some form of sexual excess, I should think."

9.) "REVISIONIST HISTORY NIGHT": Terry attended a screening of student films one night at Manhattan's tony National Arts Club on Gramercy Park Place, an establishment in which well-behaved, octogenarian patrons-of-the-arts drink vermouth and feed their poodle dogs little mignon, right at the table. Terry was given

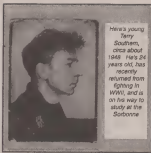


Photo Courtesy of Nite Southern, Estate of Terry Southern

a tour of the century-old venue, which included a brief history lesson about the building. I arrived late, so I asked Terry to recount the history of the century-old National Arts Club and he told me that it was "designed in 1975 by Ken Russell."

10.) "MARLON BRANDO ZYGOTE DAY": Terry electrified our class when he told us about a party at Marlon Brando's house in the sixties. To this day, none of us knows whether this actually happened or not (it probably did not) but Terry really made us see it:

"Bud Brando's housekeeper miscarried his baby, right there at the party - this right-nave up. So, dig, Marlon scoops the [stillborn infant] into a coffee cup, and he proffers this mug to all of the guests, instructing them to 'taste the zygote.'"

11.) On the first day of class, during Terry's second year with us, the smug film school administrator encountered Terry in the hallway. "Hi, Terry," she chirped, cheerfully. "Did you do some writing this summer?" With a fake smile, he replied. "Heh - heh - heh. [long beat] No."

12.) Terry told us the same joke every week, and we would all pretend we had never heard him tell it before - since he would take such pleasure in laying it down, and then breaking himself up; hearing the joke became something we looked forward to every week. The joke, roughly, is that Little Red Riding Hood is skipping down the path. The Big Bad Wolf pops out of some brambles and growls, "Little girl, I'm going to fuck you!" Little Red replies, "Stick to the script, Grandpa, it just says you're supposed to eat me."

One of my very favorite things about being a student in Terry Southern's class, is that he used to do nice things for every single one of his students. He wrote, and posted, humorous letters to each of us, just as he had done for our hospitalized classmates. (In a letter to one student, Terry recounts an episode of "Beavis and Butthead" that he particularly enjoyed -

and for no reason, about halfway into the letter, he reverts into fluent French); he tried to help get another student the film rights to Leonard Cohen's novel "Beautiful Losers," he sent all of us books and CD's that he thought we would like; he phoned all of us, too, late into the night—not only to speculate about George Bush, but also to make sure that we were not too overwhelmed by our schoolwork. Terry freely gave students his home phone number, demanding that each of us would call him, too, and often. (When we called Terry, he would routinely answer the phone with a gleeful shout of, "Pronto!" When Terry would call us, and our answering machines would pick up, he would, invariably, keep yelling, "Mayday!" until we picked up the call.)

I often think that Terry felt sympathetic with young people who were trying, unsuccessfully, to get breaks in show business, because it was so difficult for him to get his own projects going in his later years. He, better than anybody, knew how cruel, unethical (and how downright creepy!) Hollywood was. He did something especially nice for me, something that I'll never take for granted:

Going back to that very first day of class, Terry's instructions were simple: Everyone around the room was supposed to read a few pages of a screenplay that he or she had written during the previous summer vacation, and he would critique them. After each person read, Terry offered really sharp, incisive comments. I was the last one to go. After I read, he made no comments at all. He just stared at me as if I were something out of a Petrie dish and uttered, "Next." I wanted to crawl into a corner. My favorite writer hates my guts!

One week later, a priority mail package arrived at my 113th Street apartment, return addressed from East Canaan, Connecticut, Terry's home since the sixties. The envelope contained a copy of a short story he had written, "Heavy Put Away or, A Hustle Not Wholly Devoid of a Certain Grossness, Granted." Along with the manuscript came this note: "I thought this might make a nice film for you." Terry knew that, like all film students, I was supposed to start production on a short film that would serve as my masters' thesis, and he felt that this would be a good story for my film. When I encountered Terry in class, a few days later, he asked if I'd like to co-author the script for "Heavy Put-Away" with him.

Naturally, it was the happiest day of my life. After years of Hollywood people telling me to get lost - practically throwing me out of their offices because they felt my writing was too "weird" - here is the validation I needed. An offer of "collaboration" from my all-time favorite writer!

Terry and I spent three or four lunch breaks hammering out the adaptation. His original short story is set in a tavern, where a con man details his shady exploits to a

Mickey Spillane-type writer. Terry and I discussed how to open the story up and make it more cinematic; how to show characters that had only been described in the story; and, most of all, how to make this twenty-five minute flick funny.

We wrote at some of the taverns up near Columbia. I'd fuel him with ham sandwiches and Heinekens ("We're getting a bit thirsty. Charles, yes?"), and watch his imagination take flight. The always-great Gail Gerber, a dance instructor who was Terry's dutiful companion for many years (always taking his arm and walking him to school each week), would give me balletting instructions for watching Terry carefully when I walked him down Broadway for lunch ("Don't let Terry do any plies across the street," she would admonish; not to mention, "Watch Terry at the traffic lights"). Many times, Terry and I would be followed up the street by homeless guys, who would hit on the avuncular-looking Terry for a few bucks, greeting him with cries of, "Yo, Professor, how about a dollah?"

It was also during these writing lunches that I got my first taste of how badly Terry must have felt about his decline in the entertainment world, in the eighties and nineties. At a sushi place near campus, where he and Gail ate from a huge wooden



in 1985, and starring Whoopi Goldberg, was Terry's first filmed screenplay in fifteen years. Terry said that he and Nilsson had penned the script for Robin Williams -- but that it was impossible for he and Nilsson to get it to the fast-talking megastar.

horror! The horror! (Terry's friend Rip Torn directed "The Telephone;" in fact, the grand Mr. Torn always makes sure, whenever he is interviewed, to put in a plug for his late, great friend.)

Terry told me more of his troubles: In the eighties, he scored a gig writing for "Saturday Night Live," through his friend, the satirist Michael O' Donoghue, but he was soon replaced, because his sketches—one of which he told me was called "The Disgusting Gyno"—were deemed improper for network television, even though the program aired at such a late hour. I learned at roughly the same time, through a network of fellow film geeks, that a strapped-for-cash Terry had written a hardcore Desnee Cousteau picture, "Randy, the Electric Lady," under a pseudonym. I got ahold of the video—research, of course—and found out that in between the hardcore sex acts, the film was peppered with acerbic/literate dialogue, the likes of which I had never seen in a porn flick, much of the dialogue simply consisting of Southern archly sending himself up. (In the film, a doctor at a Masters and Johnson-like sex clinic barges in on two other scientists who happen to be in flagrante delicto. He tells them, "No fucking in here. This is the sex room"—a joke on "No fighting in here. This is the war room" from "Dr. Strangelove.")

While Terry's style (sometimes dark, never mean-spirited), may not have been in vogue in the Hollywood of the nineties, at least, he never gave up. Between classes, when he wasn't being treated to lunch by his students, he would sometimes sit alone in the classroom, huddled over pen and paper. Once, I peeked at what he was writing; it was something about Slim Pickens, who rode the rocket in "Strangelove"—an anecdote, apparently, for his memoirs. (Terry did have a biographer, Lee Hill, who accompanied him



plank full of Jules Verne-like delicacies, one of which I think may have even been some kind of a starfish (and washing it all down with endlessly flowing sake) I asked him about a project he had co-authored with songwriter Harry Nilsson, "The Telephone." This low-budget film released

"Yeah, Robin's scripts have to go through his wife, and she wouldn't give it to him," Terry mumbled, downing one more in his series of sakes.

I felt so awful. The genius scribe of "Dr. Strangelove" and "Easy Rider," and he couldn't get a script to fucking MORK? The



to class on a couple of occasions.)

Terry always looked a bit pallid, sometimes more than other times. He came to school on the days when he wasn't feeling quite up to snuff, too, always afraid to miss a class, and needing every bit of the meager money that Columbia paid him; once, he walked into the film school office and asked if there was any such thing as a "faculty loan" — just as a strapped student would often need to take out a "student loan."

My career as a student at Columbia University was soon over. I graduated from film school in 1993 and moved back to my hometown of Los Angeles. I saw Terry once more the following year, when I came to New York for a visit. Terry always liked to hear about what was going on in L.A., where he had not spent too much time over the last few years. When I walked into his class—which was stuffed to the rafters with all-new, fresh-faced students, he beamed, "Zigman! What news from the Coast?"

The following year, I became a Professor of Film myself, at small Augusta State University, in Georgia. (Augusta's a sleepy bedroom community that wakes up once a year for the Masters Golf Tournament.) I wrote Terry a letter, telling him that I would be teaching a course called "Literature into Film," and that I would concentrate, for a few weeks, on his novels and films (this turned out, by the way, to be the most popular part of the class). He wrote me back, immediately, and it's a letter I will always treasure. The letter was printed on the back of an invitation to an Independent Film Project awards dinner in NYC, where Terry had been honored that week (finally!) along with such other silver screen luminaries as Joel and Ethan Coen, Sigourney Weaver, Jane Campion, and Harvey Keitel. This missive reads as follows:

"Dear Chuck: Delighted to hear from you, and doubly delighted to hear of your good fortune there among the Georgia Peaches. If memory serves, teeny bop

Georgia poon tastes almost exactly like peaches and cream — and is lined with little puppy dog tongues which know (is this instinct or what?) how to deal with a man's throbbing johnson. Am I right???

"Anyway, please keep me posted. Quite a bash the other night, the prestigious IFP Award Dinner. Was obliged to do the hang with Bobby, Marty, and Harve and finally,

**Here's another one of Terry during his Columbia University teaching years, early 1990s, Terry about 68 years old.**

*Photo Courtesy of Nile Southern, Estate of Terry Southern*

[of course, to drop on Sig Weaver (P&C; [peaches and cream] Chuck, but definitely yum yum!)]

The letter came in an envelope, return addressed from "Tonya Harding, East Canaan, Connecticut."

I talked to Terry one more time, in the fall of 1995, about a month before he passed away. I was responsible for finding a keynote speaker for Augusta State University's yearly writers' get-together, the Sandstone Writer's Conference, which happens to be the largest annual convention of writers in the South. I suggested Terry to be the "grand marshal," a move that thrilled my fellow faculty members who didn't know what happened to this famous recluse. The college's literature faculty was fascinated by the idea that Terry — whom they, too, recognized to be a great icon — would be spending a whole weekend with students. When I asked Terry if he and Gail would like to fly down to Georgia, his enthusiasm was tempered by matters pecuniary.

"Any bread," he asked? (He said he'd do it for five hundred dollars. Apparently, money was now ultra-ultra-tight in Terry's house; in a rare interview Terry had given to the Washington Post a few months earlier, the interviewer found, on Terry's mantle, a stack of past due notices and a rifle.)

I was buoyed up by the idea of squiring Terry and Gail around the historic South, but if never came to be. For soon after I had spoken to him about it, Terry collapsed on the stairwell, on his way to teaching a class at Columbia, and he passed away four days later.

In the sixties, Terry Southern was one of the most prominent members of the same Mt. Rushmore pantheon as Kerouac, Ginsburg, Burroughs, Leary, etc. But due to the vagaries of a film industry that wasted his time, and no longer brokered in his type of humor, he soon — inexplicably — "slipped off the list," except to his diehard fans. Until now:

Because, as I write this, it's now Spring 2003, and some exciting events are happening on the Terry Southern front: Two new Terry Southern-related books have recently hit the stores: "A Grand Guy: The Art and Life of Terry Southern," by Lee Hill — the very first published biography of Our Hero — has recently been published by HarperCollins; Terry's tip-top son, Nile, along with his co-editor Josh Alan Friedman, have also just issued a fantastic book of Terry's mega-rare short stories and letters, none of which has ever been published in book form — "Now Dig This: The Unspeakable Writings of Terry Southern, 1950-1995." (Grove Press). And, in March 2004 (president "Cult Movie" readers can already pre-order it from Amazon.com), Arcade Books will publish Nile Southern's incredible "Candy Men," the story of Terry, and co-author Mason Hoffenberg's, tribulations in publishing their novel, "Candy," back in the swingin' sixties — which, apparently, weren't swingin' enough to accept the book as a non-pornographic work. (Jail sentences, anyone?)

But that's not all: Over the last week, the New York Public Library became the proud owner of the Terry Southern Archives, miles of unpublished Southern-iana that, according to Nile Southern, will also serve a secondary (and no less important) function as an examination into the second half of the twentieth-century. The Southern Archives were purchased for the library by director Steven Soderbergh ("Traffic," "Erin Brokovich"), who apparently intends to start making movies based upon Terry Southern's published, and unpublished, writings. When a great filmmaker goes into the Terry Southern Business, all of us profit.

Terry's friend William S. Burroughs (the two appear together in the documentary Burroughs, where they hilariously try out a Reichian Therapy "orgone energy tank" together) once said of this grand guy, Terry Southern knows how to write. And the ancient Egyptians said something that was pretty cool, too. (Since I know I have to end a hagiographic/sycophantic article like this in the most pretentious way I can, I won't disappoint): Those wily Egyptians said that if you utter a person's name three times, that person will live forever. In that case: Terry Southern. Terry Southern. Terry Southern.

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# Remembering Lon Chaney, Jr.

by Tom Weaver



The early 1950s found Lon Chaney, Jr., in a state of transition. The trim, physically imposing star of the classic *O. F. Mice and Men* (1939)

and Universal horror favorites like *Man Made Monster* and *The Wolf Man* (1941) was now freelancing, now coping with middle age (and middle age spread), now playing small supporting roles for movie companies both major and minor. And, as always, the actor always seemed at his best in horror and Westerns—exactly the genres in which he was cast by neophyte producer Herman Cohen, who signed Lon to appear in three of his early Realart productions. Chaney played a jungle police commissioner in Cohen's *Bride of the Gorilla* (1951), a south-of-the-border chiller written and directed by *The Wolf Man*'s Curt Siodmak, an aged, wheelchair-bound landgrabber in the post-Civil War Western *The Bushwhackers* (1952), and, most memorably, the title role of the noble Indian leader in *Battles of Chief Pontiac* (1952), a (loosely) fact-based Colonial American tale shot on location in South Dakota.

In this interview, perhaps his last, Cohen (who lost a pitched cancer battle in the summer of 2002, shortly after this interview was conducted) talks about these productions and his memories of his professional association with Lon Chaney, Jr.

**CULT MOVIES:** How did you get your job with Jack Broder's Realart Pictures?

**Herman Cohen:** After I got out of the Marine Corps in 1949, I was working for Columbia, in their publicity department. What was I making? 50 bucks a week? Anyway, Jack Broder and his family owned theaters in Detroit. I'm also from Detroit. But I had never met the man. And I talked to a couple of people who said, "Oh, Jack Broder's looking for an executive assistant." At that time, Jack was president of Realart Films—did you ever hear of Realart?

**CM:** They were re-releasing Universal's old monster pictures at the time.

**Cohen:** Not just the monster pictures. Jack Broder had put up a

## From soundstage jungles to Sioux Indian villages: Producer Herman Cohen on the Legendary Lon

tremendous amount of money, millions, for all of Universal's old pictures. But what a mistake he made: He bought 'em for theatrical only, not knowing at that time about TV, video, DVD, you name it. Oh, God, the millions more he would have made! Universal at that time was in trouble financially, so they sold him the reissue rights to all their *Abbott and Costello*, all their pictures. And now that Jack was

making a lot of money

everybody started asking him,

with this,

"Why don't you make films? Why don't you go into production and make second features?" At that time, there were still double features in the drive-ins and what have you. "You could make money with second features if the price was right." So Jack Broder decided to put together a unit called Jack Broder Productions to make some second features.

**CM:** And that's when you came into the picture.

**Cohen:** That's right. I was interviewed by him—I think I had a couple of interviews with him. I had to meet his wife Beatrice and his kids, too, for them to say yes or no. (They had six kids.) Anyway, he hired me. And that's how I started working for Jack Broder.

**CM:** He hired you because he was about to start making pictures, and he was looking for a...

**Cohen:** He needed a schlepper—he needed somebody to stick the broom up their ass and clean his office [laughs].

**CM:** What prompted Broder to make a horror picture, *Bride of the Gorilla*? Was it the fact that the Universals had done well for him for him?

**Cohen:** That's right. Siodmak which Siodmak was it? Curt? Yes, Curt Siodmak had this story, *Bride of the Gorilla*—well, it wasn't called *Bride of the Gorilla* at first. But anyway, he had a horror story which needed a lot of work. So we all worked on it. And we hired [as director] Curt Siodmak, who had been in this country a long time but, if you talked to him, you'd think he arrived yesterday! And that's when we did *Bride of the Gorilla*. We had a pretty



good cast, because I was able to sign Lon Chaney—Raymond Burr, who was tremendous. I used him, even when I went in production myself.

CM: You hired Lon Chaney based on the fact that he was popular from the Universal horror pictures.  
Cohen: Right.

CM: Whose idea was it to get Barbara Payton?

Cohen: Jack Broder. He played cards with Jack Warner at the Friars, at the Hollywood Athletic Club on Sunset Boulevard and what have you. They would play for money. Jack Warner mentioned that he had this broad under contract, doing nothing, sitting on her ass, and Jack Broder said, "Gee, I need a young, sexy girl for this film I'm gonna do." And Jack Warner says, "Take her! You can have her." They didn't like her [at Warner Brothers]—she was screwing everybody on the lot. I think we paid hardly nothing to borrow her from Warners. Jack Warner said, "I gotta get rid of that [bitch]." So...it was a very cheap deal for Jack Broder to borrow her from Warners. This was after she did a big picture with James Cagney, *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* [1950].

CM: And what was her attitude about being loaned out like that?

Cohen: She was very unhappy about being loaned to do *Bride of the Gorilla*. Here she thought she was gonna be another Joan Crawford or Bette Davis, and she ends up doing *Bride of the Gorilla*! We rented space at the Sam Goldwyn Studios, which was the old United Artists Studios, and that's where we made *Bride of the Gorilla*. The entire picture was shot on the set. The jungle, everything, we built the whole thing on the set. I think we shot it in ten days.

CM: When I interviewed Curt Siodmak, he said his title for the movie was *The Face in the Water*. Does that ring a bell?

Cohen: Now that you mention it, I think that was his title. "Cause at one point in the movie, when Raymond Burr turns into a gorilla, he looks in the water and he sees his reflection. But I changed the title. Jack wanted an exploitation title, and I came up with *Bride of the Gorilla*.

CM: Did anyone notice, or care, that Siodmak's screenplay was very much like Lon Chaney's *The Wolf Man*, which he also wrote? It's South America and a gorilla instead of Britain and a werewolf.

Cohen: Nobody [at Reilart] ever saw *The Wolf Man*, including me. Well, you look at the horror pictures, they all stole from each other. But I never saw *The Wolf Man*.

CM: Lon Chaney—depending on the movie, and depending on who I'm talking to, he could be either a wild man or a pussycat. Which one did you wind up with?

Cohen: For some reason, maybe because I was so young at that time (I was in my early

20s), he got to like me. He was my responsibility...and he was a pussycat. He didn't like the other actors, though, and he didn't like Siodmak—he couldn't

He just did his job. I don't think he was too happy doing it because everyone would compare him to his father. But...he needed the money, and he did the job. And we wanted his name.

CM: And even with him taking his naps in the dressing room, he was still always ready for the cameras when needed?

Cohen: He never held us up. He was very professional in front of the camera.

CM: You also had a very professional guy behind the camera, Charles Van Enger.

Cohen: Oh, he was wonderful, that oldtimer, he was great. We used him on a lot of pictures at that time. Charley Van Enger did a lot of big pictures years before, and he taught me a great deal also. See, I was learning—that's why I took the job with Jack Broder. "Cause I'd be doing everything. And instead of giving me money, Jack would give me titles—he made me a vice-president of Reilart, a vice-president of Jack Broder Productions and what have you.

CM: You made *Bride of the Gorilla* at the time when Barbara Payton was romantically linked with both Franchot Tone and Tom Neal.

Cohen: Franchot Tone was a very wealthy man and he had been quite a star at one time. In fact, he had been married to Joan Crawford—did you remember that? So he was dating Barbara. And Barbara was also swinging with this ex-cop/half-assed actor from Republic Pictures named Tom Neal. We told the captain at the Goldwyn gate that, if Tom Neal was coming, call the stage immediately, and especially if Franchot was there—she had to get rid of him!



Cohen & Payton behind the scenes of the *Bride of the Gorilla*

understand him! Lon would come to me and say, "What the hell's this man talking about?" [Laughs] So I would have to interpret! I was the only one who could understand Curt Siodmak's English, so they all came to me: "What did he say? What did Curt say?"

CM: Did he like Barbara Payton at least?  
Cohen: Ummm...not really. No. When he was through shooting, he walked off and he went into his dressing room and started drinking—he was drinking in those days.



Photo courtesy of Don G. Smith

Franchot Tone  
& Barbara  
Payton



CM: Tone and Tom Neal didn't know about each other?

Cohen: They could have known about each other, that I don't know, but they never met at the studio. They came close, but they didn't meet. The big fistfight they had was after our picture was made.

CM: So both visited the set individually?

Cohen: Oh, yeah.

CM: Did you like Barbara Payton?

Cohen: Yes, I liked her. Look, like all whores that I've ever met, she had a heart of gold. She was just a fun person. She liked to laugh...and she was a little crazy. I think she was doing drugs...she certainly was drinking. But not on the set. And as much as she was pissed off at Warners, 'cause she knew they were gonna dump her, and that therefore *Bride of the Gorilla* was on her way to being dumped, she never let it interfere with her work. I've got some pictures...very intimate pictures of her with me...I was a young guy, she was a beautiful girl at that time. Barbara Payton was a lovely person. She was a whore who got lucky. And deep down, she was a lovely person, she was very sweet. It was horrible how she died, downtown, as a whore, selling herself for five, ten bucks. That just made me ill when I heard about that. I actually liked her.

CM: Despite your youth, did Jack Broder have a lot of confidence in you once a picture got rolling?

Cohen: I doubt it [laughs]. But Jack Broder didn't know anything about production. And I was learning. I always hired the top production supervisors and assistant directors, people who really knew their stuff. And when things would come up in a meeting and they'd ask me to make a decision (I was making the decisions on the film), I'd say, "We'll discuss it tomorrow morning." And that night, I would dash to UCLA, to the Cinema Library, to read up on what the fuck they were talking about

[laughs]. That's a true story! I'd read up, or I'd call up a couple friends, a couple film editors I knew from Columbia, and ask them. The next morning, suddenly I became very bright!

CM: These early Realtor pictures—was Broder on the set a lot, or did he leave everything to you guys?

Cohen: He would only go there to take pictures with his kids. And watch a few important scenes. He was more interested in the schedule, if we were behind. He was always threatening, "Herman! If you're late, I pool the switch! I pool the switch!"

CM: On *Bride of the Gorilla*, you were the "Assistant to the Producer"—

Cohen: But I was actually running the show for Jack.

CM: Broder took the producer credit; and the associate producer is somebody I never heard of, Edward Leven.

Cohen: Oh [laughs]—oh, God. What a thief! He wasn't the associate producer, he was nothing on it. He talked his way into it—he was a great talker! Edward Leven is somebody that Jack met at the Friars Club, he was the son of a very wealthy friend of Jack's. All of a sudden one day, Jack brings in this guy to the studio and he says, "Herman, Edward Leven needs credits. He has to get into the business." So he made him associate producer of *Bride of the Gorilla*. Jack instructed me, "I want you to tell him what he has to know"—and here I am, learning myself! And, Jack added, "Don't let him make any decisions!" [Laughs] That's how Edward Leven got involved. Then one day our prop man told Jack that all the furniture that we rented at the prop house, Leven had delivered to his home—he stole it all [laughs]. Leven had the prop man ship all the furniture that he picked out at the prop house to his home—just as we were building the sets and what have you. He was furnishing his house on Jack Broder!

CM: How in the world did he think he was going to get away with that? Didn't he think that people would eventually notice that there was no furniture on the sets?

Cohen: No, no, no, no, no! We had our furniture too—it was a double order! He picked out what he wanted for his home. Our prop man told Jack Broder, who threw Leven off the Sam Goldwyn lot. I wonder if he's still alive...I've never seen him since he was fired.

CM: Seven months after *Bride of the Gorilla* was shot, Leven filed a breach of contract suit against Broder claiming, for one thing, that he'd never been paid. He had the nerve to steal from Broder and then sue him??

Cohen: Yeah, because he didn't know that we knew everything. He wasn't paid and he was thrown off the Goldwyn lot. He thought he was Sam Goldwyn [laughs]. But he was kind of a likable guy. I mean, I

got along with him—he didn't want to get me passed off at him, because he didn't even know where to park his car when he came on the lot. So that's Edward Leven..!

CM: Curt Siodmak told me that one guy that Chaney really didn't get along with was Raymond Burr. Do you have any memory of that?

Cohen [scoffing]: We didn't have the time for them not to get along with each other. We made the whole picture in ten days and we came in under budget. So there was no time to fight, not at all. But, on this picture, there were no friends among the actors.

CM: But you got along with everybody.

Cohen: I learned very young that you have to be a diplomat. Therefore I was kissing everybody's ass. 'Cause I knew that if I kiss their butts, they're gonna be on the stage, they'll know their lines. I was even reading lines with Barbara and reading lines with Lon. With Raymond I didn't have to, 'cause Raymond knew all his lines. Oh, he was so professional. And a wonderful guy.

CM: And you used him in at least one other picture...

Cohen: I used in several pictures—I used him again in *The Brass Legend* [1956] and in *Crime of Passion* [1957]. His agent was a nice guy, too, Lester Salkow, I remember him well. Once they got their deal to do Perry Mason, it was wonderful, because Raymond became a millionaire. Raymond was a hell of an actor. Great actor, great voice, and I knew he was gonna become something. God, when I gave him the part of the inspector of the LAPD in *Crime of Passion*, he was terrific. And he was terrific in *Bride of the Gorilla*. It wasn't a bad picture if I remember, *Bride of the Gorilla*, considering we did it in ten days.

CM: I thought Chaney was excellent in *The Bushwhackers*, playing an elderly, arthritic villain—and looking rather like the old sheriff he played in *High Noon* [1952].

Cohen: What did you think of the cast I put together for *The Bushwhackers*? Names like Lawrence Tierney, Wayne Morris (he'd just left Warner Brothers), Dorothy Malone, John Ireland...for a cheap picture, it had a hell of a cast. And we signed a young guy who had never directed before, named Rod Amateau. A hell of a talent. Rod and a buddy of his [Tom Gries], a guy he was rooming with, wrote the script. They were very close friends at that time. For *The Bushwhackers*, we rented the Western Street from Warners, and we also used the Western Street at Columbia a couple days. We shot in and around town, we didn't go on location any further than the Western Streets.

CM: Why did Broder want to get into Westerns? Because it was just "the thing to do" at that time?

Cohen: That's right. The first picture we did was *Two Dollar Bette* [a 1951 movie about a compulsive racetrack gambler], and

the only reason for that is that Jack Broder loved to go to the races [laughs], that's why we did it. We did *Bride of the Gorilla* because we thought, "Hey, let's do a horror picture. They always make money." At that time, Westerns also all made money. That's when these two young guys Rod Amateau and Tom Gries brought in their [*Bushwhackers*] script, and Jack liked the script. Jack's ten-year-old son Bobby used to read it to him! Bobby Broder's a top agent now, by the way.

CM: And he's in *The Bushwhackers*, according to the credits.

Cohen: I think a couple of Jack's kids were put in *The Bushwhackers*. Bobby was the oldest son. Jack would come in some mornings, when there was something that he had to make a decision about, and say to me, "Bobby told me last night that..." blah blah blah, and here's what I've decided." Well, I had already called little Bobby the day before and said to him, "Look, tell your dad..."

CM: Oh, that's brilliant!

Cohen: I used to take Bobby for ice cream sundaes and stuff, to get him on our side! I knew that he would tell his dad what to do, and his dad would do it. He was 11 or 12, maybe, at that time.

CM: How was Chaney on *The Bushwhackers* and *Battles of Chief Pontiac*? Did he seem to like those pictures better?

Cohen: He liked Rod Amateau on *The Bushwhackers*, he had a lot of respect for him, and he liked the cast. However, Lon never spent time with any of the cast. When he finished his work, he went his own way. He was never close to John Ireland. Of course, John Ireland was hot, trying to "make" Dorothy Malone all the time.

CM: On *Battles of Chief Pontiac*, who made the decision to shoot in South Dakota?

Cohen: While we were trying to determine where to shoot, we found out from talking to location people that MGM had just built a fort outside of Rapid City, South Dakota, for a movie. I called the Chamber of Commerce and found out that the fort was still standing. It needed some work but it was still there, right by the lake. I went there several times to check the locations before I made the deals.

CM: On this picture, you were the associate producer, and the producer was Irving Starr.

Cohen: Irving Starr was a card-playing buddy of Jack Broder, they used to go to the track together and what have you. And Irving Starr was down on his luck—he'd been a producer at Columbia until he had a fight with Harry Cohn and he was thrown out of Columbia. And that just killed him. He was out of a job, needed money—and Jack Broder was always helping his friends. So he hired Irving Starr to produce *Battles of Chief Pontiac*, and Irving Starr had nothing

to do with it. In fact, he never even came to the location. But he was a nice guy, I have nothing bad to say about Irving Starr. He said, "Herman...you make the picture."

I flew up to South Dakota, oh, three or four times, to check the locations, to talk to the head of the Office of Indian Affairs—we also needed Indians for the picture, right? I met a couple of the chiefs, chiefs of the different segments of the Sioux tribe, because I had to make a deal with them. That was quite fascinating for me. (There wasn't a picture I made that I didn't learn something—my entire life in this business has been a learning process.) To make the deal, I had to go to a peace meeting, and I had to smoke a peace pipe, me and my assistant director Richard Dixon—oh, he was a wonderful guy, I used him in half a dozen pictures. What a sweetie he was. Anyway, here we are in this huge teepee,

They all wanted to be in the film!

I walked away. Got in my car and left. (I thought I was gonna get an arrow in my back as I was leaving!) Next morning, oh God, it's like six-thirty, seven o'clock, I hear, "Woo woo woo woo, woo woo woo woo, woo woo woo woo," tom toms going and what have you, outside of the Alex Johnson Hotel. The phone rings and it's Dickie, my assistant, and he says, "Herm, look out the window, look out the window." I say, "What? What?" He said, "The chief and his tribe are here to make peace with you!" See, the Sioux tribe had all kinds of different tribes-within-the-tribe, and these guys I had met with didn't want me to go some place else, they wanted to make peace with me. They came up to the hotel and they brought me a magnificent pair of cowboy boots—I don't know where they stole 'em and how they got my size, I never



*Bride of the Gorilla* starring Barbara Payton, Lon Chaney, Raymond Burr and Tom Conway

the chief's teepee, sitting on fur pelts and what have you, talking about how many young braves we needed, and who could ride horses, and this and that and what have you. And they passed the peace pipe along. Then the chief said, "We want \$5000 a day." Well, *Battles of Chief Pontiac* was a cheap budget picture! MGM had ruined these guys by paying 'em a lot of money. So I got pissed off. I got up, and I wiped my lips from the pipe, and I said, "For \$5000 a day, I'll be the chief!" [Laughs] I turned to Dick and I said, "Dickie. Come on. Let's get the hell out of here." And we start walking away. Well, as we walked away, the tribal council came out of the teepee, running after us, bowing to me: "If you don't make a deal, we get a new chief!"

did find out. And I did make peace with 'em. I can't remember what I paid the chief who I put in charge—I think it was five hundred a day, not five thousand a day.

CM: And the chief who asked for the \$5000 a day—was he "out" at that point?

Cohen: No, no—he was the main dancer in front of the hotel! We kept him as the chief, and he got 500 a day or something like that. He was like the wrangler, he was the one who got the [Indians] we needed. Each day Dick Dixon would tell him, "Tomorrow we need 12 braves" or "We need six women" or "We need five kids"—and he would get 'em.

For the Indian village in the movie, we got the land, and then the Indians all came with



Exploitation movie legend Cohen with his most famous characters: Teenage Warewolf and Frankenstein (& makeup man Philip Scheer)

their teepees—they brought their teepees and everything from where they were. They put the village together, and that's where they lived. In the morning, food had to be delivered to them. We made a deal with a bakery in Rapid City and they each got a loaf of white bread...they got a hunk of buffalo meat...and a quart of milk. That was their breakfast. However, one morning, I got a call that the Indians were packing their teepees, they were leaving. "Leaving?" "Yes. The bread truck didn't show up!" So I woke up Dick Dixon and we dashed to the bakery—they were late in baking the white bread, and they didn't have a driver for the truck. So I ended up driving the bread out to the location, in the truck, with Dick, to stop them from leaving!

CM: And Lex Barker, the star of *Chief Pontiac*?

Cohen: Lex was quite a ladies' man, and a nice guy. He just came off doing *Tarzan*, so he was used to cheap films. This was his one of his first film with clothes, playing this scout. Lex was a nice guy and he knew exactly what he had to do. But he was a lousy actor [laughs]. The leading lady, Helen Westcott, was a very good actress.

CM: Where did you get the actors and extras who played all the English soldiers, and the German Hessians?

Cohen: I went up there scouting locations and they had an Air Force base, Rapid City

Air Force Base. I knew I needed extras—we couldn't bring 'em from Hollywood, this was a budget picture! So I called the commanding officer, who was Brigadier General Richard Ellsworth, and went to meet him. We became instant friends. General Ellsworth said, "You can have whatever you want." For instance, water was at a premium, so he sent out the Air Force water trucks for my whole company. And, of course, that's where I got the army for the Brits as well as the Hessians. Ellsworth and his wonderful wife and two daughters, we all became good friends and we'd have dinner in their home on the base. He told me not to touch his daughters—and not to let Lex Barker get near 'em [laughs]. Then there's something I shouldn't tell you but I will: On weekends, if I had to get to L.A., he'd have an Air Force jet take me back! With Dick Dixon, and with Ellsworth's wife, who wanted to go shopping in Beverly Hills, and Lex Barker—whoever wanted to get back to L.A. for the weekend. This could never be done by a president, but if you were the commanding general of a base, you were the king. You didn't requisition anything, you just did what you wanted to do [laughs]. Especially if you were in a base like in Rapid City, South Dakota! He was so happy that I would hire his people, 'cause they were so bored—there was nothing fuckin' to do there. And we hired several hundred of his people. To

determine which of his guys we were going to give speaking parts to, we had interviews at the Service Club on the base. I remember this one Saturday morning, I was going there with my staff to interview whoever would show up. Since it was the weekend, we doubted that anyone would be there. Well, as we drove close to the Service Club, there were guys standing around the block! They all wanted to get in the film. After all, Rapid City, South Dakota, there was nothing to do there, except go to Mount Rushmore. And how many times can you see it? A short time later [March 1953], General Ellsworth was on board a plane that hit a mountain in the Azores, and that's when he was died. And after he was killed, they renamed the base after him, to the Ellsworth Air Force Base.

CM: I know Lon Chaney was a great outdoorsman—how did he enjoy going to South Dakota and making *Chief*

*Pontiac*?

Cohen: He spent all his time with the Indians, he was with the Indians all the time. He was playing Chief Pontiac and he wanted to "get the feel of the Indians and their lives"—he didn't want to live in a suite at the Hotel Alex Johnson in town, where we all were. So we built a big teepee for him, and he lived out there with the Indians. And he put himself in his role. He took *Chief Pontiac* seriously. And he did not drink during *Pontiac*, by the way.

CM: Once you started making the movie, what were the Indians like to work with?

Cohen: Terrible. 'Cause they would drink like crazy every night. There were two or three of 'em killed during the course of the shooting—killed at the Indian village, their deaths had nothing to do with us. We hired Indian deputy sheriffs to [maintain order] at the village, because the Indian men would get drunk at night and fight and this and that.

We'd been told by the government Indian office that we better have security, because of the alcoholic problem with the Indians. We also needed deputy sheriffs to keep the Indians there—otherwise, somebody we established in the movie today, tomorrow they're gone!

Another thing I recall—the young teenagers who we used as braves, they were quite Americanized, and they resented being called Indians! When

someone would say, "You five Indians over there..."—they didn't like that at all. They felt they were Americans, and that we were looking down on them.

CM: They were terrible to work with—but Chaney liked them?

Cohen: Oh, yeah, he liked them. Lon was into history, the history of the Indians, and he knew the history of Fort Detroit. By the way, that's one of the reasons why Jack Broder liked the script: He was from Detroit, and this was [set at] Fort Detroit. And some of the story was true. The involvement of the German Hessian troops was true. Spreading small pox on blankets

Dakota—on our cheap picture!

CM: Was there any night life in South Dakota?

Cohen: There was nothing to do at night except have a drink in the bar or something and go to sleep. We had to get up four-thirty, five o'clock in the morning.

CM: Was there anybody there who claimed to be descended from Chief Pontiac?

Cohen: You're forgetting, this was the Sioux, the Sioux in South Dakota. Chief Pontiac's tribe was out of Detroit. The tribe we hired was a different tribe.

CM: And your director, Felix Feist?

gave to his people before they went to war, he had tears in his eyes. Here is this two-bit movie we're making, and here's Lon Chaney with tears in his eyes doing his scenes. He thought he was the fuckin' Indian chief! He ate their food, by the way—the loaf of bread, the hunk of buffalo meat and the quart of milk.

CM: Did you ever see him again after these three movies?

Cohen: No. But, you know, that's the business.

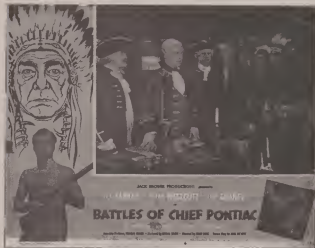
CM: And when you think back on Lon Chaney—what lasting memories?

Cohen: He was a nice guy. He had problems. His father was a big silent star...and he was living off his dad's name. He was a good actor. I mean, he did *Of Mice and Men*, and he thought he was going to be a big star after that. We had a couple conversations, when he would be drinking and talking about Hollywood and everything else. He was unhappy because of his career—his career went no place outside of Universal [his Universal horror films] and a couple others. He was a damn good actor, but nobody gave him the credit. So he wasn't a very happy man.

CM: Did you hang out with him much?

Cohen: Not much, no. Don't forget, I was in my early twenties, I wasn't gonna hang around Lon Chaney. And Lon Chaney wasn't gonna hang around us. And he never did. For instance, on *The Bushwhackers* we all went out together for dinner one night, John Ireland, Dorothy Malone, Myrna Dell, Wayne Morris, Lawrence Tierney...but Lon wasn't one of the group at all. Lon was never with the actors. He just wasn't interested in being with the actors or the crew. He did his job, and that was it. That's the way he was. And when we were in Rapid City, he was with the Indians all the time. He just loved the area. We had a tough time even getting him into town, for production meetings and what have you. He loved it out there in the Indian village. He was an outdoorsman. He was always an outdoorsman. He went fishing, and he went hunting, and he went here and there. He became friends with some of the Indians. He could have been fucking some of the squaws, I don't know [laughs], but he was always with the Indians!

Lon Chaney should have been, and could have been, a hell of a top actor. He could have been a big star. But because of his father, and because of what he had to live up to, everybody wanted him for horror pictures. That's why he loved the part of Chief Pontiac, it was something different. That's why, the minute I offered him the job, he took it. And he was a nice man. A big, big bruiser—and a nice, gentle guy. I always find that, the bigger the guy is, the nicer they are. It's the little short scrappy one that wants to start trouble! Lon, he was just a nice guy.—



to kill the Indians, that's true too. And of course there really was a Chief Pontiac. That's where the Pontiac cars came from—do you remember Pontiac cars? If you look at that Indian head [on Pontiac cars], it looks just like Lon Chaney! [Laughs] No, seriously!

One day, we suddenly see a couple white guys, in suits, on the location. "Who are those guys?" "I dunno...they look like they could be union organizers..." So I said, "Dick...go find out who the hell are they." Sure enough, they were union guys who had flown up from L.A.—somebody had squealed that, instead of bringing people in from L.A., we were using Indian laborers, to pick up the horse shit and everything. And they threatened to close down the set. So I told the Indians to get rid of 'em! Well, the Indians pushed 'em out the way. "Get the fuck out of here!" and what have you! And they left! But when I came back to L.A., I was called in front of the Film Council and we were fined for using Indian laborers. They came all the way to South

Cohen: He was a very good director who'd just done a hell of a picture [*The Big Trees*, 1952] with Kirk Douglas. But he had the rep of being a difficult director, and therefore, he couldn't get a job. He probably resented that he had to do a picture like *Battles of Chief Pontiac*. He wasn't difficult with us, but...he was too good for the film, let's put it that way [laughs]. Here we're making a shitkicker in ten days, and on location besides, with all the problems of location, and we had a pretty classy director. He was tough to push and handle, Felix was. But a hell of an intelligent guy. Everybody I worked with was either down on their luck, or couldn't get a job—but had terrific credits! Who was the director of photography on Pontiac? Charles Van Enger again? Oh, I loved that old guy.

CM: And, again, Chaney was good in the picture, wasn't he?

Cohen: Lon loved the part. He thought he was Chief Pontiac! In his speeches that he

# THE LON of the MOHICANS

by Tom Weaver



Lon Chaney Jr.'s greatest fame came, of course, through his performances in *Of Hides and Men* (1939) and the 'Universal horror movies—but there are many fans who feel that the actor was at the top of his form in Western and outdoor roles that better suited his rugged real-life personality. In a unique position to observe Chaney Jr. in a role of this type was John Hart, who co-starred with Lon in the Canadian-made TV series *Hawkeye* and *The Last of the Mohicans* in the mid-1950s. Hart played the frontiersman Hawkeye while Chaney played his Indian blood brother Chingachgook.

Tall and athletic, and possessed of 'movie star' good looks, Hart acted on the stage of the renowned Pasadena Playhouse as a young man, before making his screen debut in director Cecil B. DeMille's big-budget *The Buccaneer* (1938). Hart eventually fell into the low-budget Western and serial rut but he served with distinction in many youth-oriented productions: He was the perfect embodiment of radio-comic strip hero Jack Armstrong in a 1947 serial, rode

the Western plains in 52 episodes of TV's *The Lone Ranger* (playing the Masked Man) and then, in the mid-50s, brought life to James Fenimore Cooper's courageous Hawkeye in *Hawkeye* and *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Hart, now retired and residing on a California mountainside, recalls Chaney as well as the pleasures and perils of shooting *Hawkeye* in the Canadian wilds in this *Cult Movies* interview.

**Cult Movies:** Why did the Hawkeye producers think of you for the role?

**John Hart:** The same producer had a wonderful kids' series called *Fury*, about the smartest damn horse I've ever seen. In one episode they had a wonderful role for me that was practically the whole story, a crippled rodeo rider who always wants to give up. A kid gets caught in quicksand and the crippled rodeo rider crawls out of his wheelchair onto this horse and goes into the swamp and gets the kid out. The god-damned director milked it 'til I thought I was

gonna die! But it was good. And from that picture, this same producer gave me Hawkeye.

**CM:** If this was an American company, why did they want to shoot in Canada?

**Hart:** They had a financing arrangement from England and the United Kingdom, the Eady Plan. To qualify for that, we had to use several Englishmen in the crew. The director and the producer and a cameraman could be American, but everybody else had to be Canadian or British. Which was fine. We had good people, and everything worked out okay.

**CM:** Did you know Lon Chaney before you went into the series?

**Hart:** No, but I'd seen him around casually. I'll tell you what: At the end of a year up there, I didn't know him much better than I did before [laughs]. Oh, he was a strange guy. I lived on the outskirts of Toronto in a

big apartment house—I had a lovely apartment overlooking Lake Ontario and I could see Toronto off in the distance. (And I wasn't married then, so it was really a nice place.) Chaney took an apartment upstairs, and we went back and forth to work together in his "motor home": He had a nice big camper on the back of a pickup truck. And that was his dressing room, too [laughs]—he kept himself comfortable! The studio drivers drove it.

Anyway, Chaney liked Jim Beam. If anybody went to the States and didn't come back with a bottle of Jim Beam for him, he was highly incensed—he was really pissed off about it [laughs]. So I kept a bottle of Jim Beam, I put it on the kitchen sink. And when he'd come down to get me in the morning and he'd have a couple of slugs out of that bottle.

CM: Out of your bottle.

Hart: Out of my bottle, yes. Then he'd have his bottle for the day, and he'd sip away at it all day long. You could tell what time of day it was by the bottle [laughs]. I never, in all my years of working, would take a drink while I was working—God, you had too many lines to learn and too much stuff to do, you couldn't get loaded. But Chaney used to run around with Broderick Crawford and a couple of other guys, and they were just drunk all the time. And yet Chaney was never late, never didn't know his lines. He got a little "juicy" by about three in the afternoon, but he was a professional actor and knew his part and did a good job. He was never out of control.

CM: He apparently was like that for most of his career—drank and drank, then drank some more, but never got too "juicy" to do the work.

Hart: I think he was pretty frustrated with his career, all the monster pictures and stuff like that. We got along very well, and I learned things by working with him—you learn just by working with a pro, back and forth. We had a lot of scenes together, and he made it easier. He was great.

CM: Do you think he was happier in shows like Hawkeye than in his monster pictures?

Hart: Yeah. But I think he would like to have done some bigger, "straighter" things. He had a terrible family—oh, his father and his mother, he hated them and I guess they hated him. He had an unhappy childhood.

CM: This is something you know from reading about him, or he told you this?

Hart: Oh, he used to talk about it, so that's no secret. Like I said, he wanted to get into some nice "A" pictures as a straight actor. He certainly could have done it. He was a wonderful actor.

CM: The "motor home" you mentioned—was that Chaney's own?

Hart: Yes, he had somebody drive it all the way up there.

CM: And studio drivers had to drive it back and forth to the location.

Hart: I don't know whether they had to, but they were wise enough to have [someone other than Chaney] drive the truck [laughs]. That kinda made it nice, 'cause we could take it easy. It'd be about an hour's drive up and an hour's drive back, after a long day I

could stretch out and rest a little bit, in the back there with him.

CM: Sigmund Neufeld was the producer of Hawkeye, and his brother Sam Neufeld directed.

Hart: And Stanley Neufeld, a nephew, was like a manager or something. He was a nice guy. They were also somehow associated with the company that made *Fury*.

CM: Were the interiors shot on a soundstage?  
Hart: Out where we lived, they had a little dinky place that was a one-indoor-set studio. They built [the interiors of] cabins and teepees and officers' rooms there—it was just a "cover" for rain or snow. They also had the production offices there, but it wasn't very big. For everything else, we drove, oh, say, 30, 40 miles from the little dinky studio to these locations. I'd say 90 percent of it was shot outdoors. We drove way up and shot everything by a lake. There was also a river bend where we'd work. And I tried and tried to tell them: Here we are in all this beautiful country, and they wouldn't go anywhere else! Jeze!

CM: Where was the studio located?

Hart: The studio was on the outskirts of Toronto, in a little community called Mimico, which was west of downtown Toronto. It wasn't waaaaay out of Toronto, streetcars and things ran out there. Our apartment was just seven or eight blocks away from it.

CM: Did you go up to Canada and shoot all 39 episodes in one fell swoop, or did you occasionally go back home to Hollywood?

Hart: No, we shot all 39 episodes. They each had a four-day schedule. I think we started in July and finished the following February.

CM: It's interesting to hear you say you started in July. In most of the episodes that I've seen, it looks very cold.

Hart: Oh, it was, once we got towards fall. Cold as hell, it was! In fact, it got so cold one time when we were shooting that the cameras couldn't get up to speed. They had generators with lots of electricity there, so I said, "Send someone into town...buy an electric blanket...bring it back, and wrap it around the camera." We all took a break while somebody did that, and then the camera ran very well. I was always a frustrated cameraman, you see. I always used to help the camera crew, and later on I shot tons of film—I worked at Universal for three years on *Quincy*.

CM: You talk about keeping the camera warm. How did you keep warm?

Hart: Of Chaney used to hunt a lot, and he knew about some very expensive padded thermal underwear for hunters. I'm sure he got the studio to pay for this, but he sent away and got each one of us a set of this underwear. Then I had Canadian Army Arctic boots—they looked like Indian mukluks. There was a double-felt lining. I'd be out there and the temperature would be eight or ten degrees, and I'd be warm as toast! And I had some Eskimo seal skin gloves that were pretty good.

The funny thing was, my cheeks would just about freeze up. So if I had to say wwwhich or wwwhere or something like that, I'd have to go stand in front of a light and rub my cheeks and get 'em working before I did the

scene [laughs]. But that worked fine.

CM: You mentioned Chaney being a hunter. Did he do much hunting up there?

Hart: No, he didn't get a chance to. See, Toronto was like L.A.—you don't go huntin' in L.A., you go a couple of hundred miles. It was that way in Toronto too, and he just never could get away long enough to do it. But he talked about it a lot.

We made friends up there—people used to bring me elk fillet. I'd put it in my icebox and slice off a slab and cook it in butter every once in a while. Oh, man, it was good! And they had Canadian lake trout that are almost like a salmon; it's a pink meat. Boy, they're good too. And Chaney liked to cook—he loved to cook game and fish and stuff. He'd cook all that stuff, and I'd sometimes have dinner with him, I guess in his apartment. But I don't remember his apartment much at all, so I guess I only did it a few times. He'd get to drinking, you know, and... [Laughs].

Chaney had a wife who'd come up, a wife who'd wander in and out. She was just a dear person, and I guess it was very stressful—she never stayed very long [laughs]. Her name was Patsy. She'd come up for a week and then go back to Los Angeles. I kept track of her after he passed away; she lived down here in Point Loma, not too far from where I live, and I used to phone her up once in a while just to see if she was all right. She finally passed away a few years ago.

CM: You met your future wife for the first time when she appeared as an actress on an episode of *Hawkeye*.

Hart: It was near the end of shooting. I was 38 or 39 then and I'd chased around Hollywood pretty good for a long time, but I always kinda wanted to be settled. (But I'd never had enough financial security. It's feast or famine, the life of an actor.) So when the series looked good and I felt good about it, I thought, "Jeze, I'm gonna find me a nice little gal and get married and have a family" and all that sort of thing. I'd never felt that way much before 'cause I'd never felt any security about taking care of a wife. One day this darling little actress came out there...did her scenes...and I asked her for dinner. And that was it.

CM: What was her name then?

Hart: Beryl Braithwaite. She was a graduate of the Royal Academy in London and was a wonderful actress—she'd had a radio show in Canada when she was a kid, *Maggie Maggs*. Every kid in Canada from that era knows *Maggie Maggs*! And her father [Max Braithwaite] was one of the top Canadian writers—he wrote a lot of radio shows and TV and numerous books. They made a picture out of one of his books, *Why Shoot the Teacher?* [1977].

CM: What kind of money were you and Chaney making?

Hart [laughs]: I got about 800 bucks a week, and so did Chaney. That's not 'nuthin', to do the lead in a Top 20 show. That's why I was sooo disappointed when that show wasn't picked up [for a second season]. We took it seriously and worked like hell. I never would take a drink when I was working. I took my job quite seriously. Sometimes there were just pages of dialogue, but I never didn't know my dialogue. I was a good professional actor.





CM: Did they also provide your meals, or were you on your own?

Hart: I got some kind of an allowance for rent and meals—maybe a couple of hundred more a week. They also served big lunches every day on the set.

CM: And four days per episode.

Hart: Yep. When I was in those damn *Long Rangers*, they made every one in two days. And the scripts ran 33, 34, 35 pages. So that's like 16, 18 pages a day we were doing. I'd have to get up at five in the morning and start memorizing dialogue.

CM: So Hawkeye was a little bit more relaxed.

Hart: Gosh, a lot more! It was a pleasure, I enjoyed doing that show very much. I did all my own stunts and fights and stuff.

CM: And things like canoeing and "outdoorsy" activities like that?

Hart: Oh, yeah. I was a pretty good canoeist. They didn't do [canoe] scenes too much; anything that was "complicated," they shied away from [laughs]. But I chased somebody in a canoe, and I jumped from one canoe to another a couple of times. I could do all that stuff.

CM: Chaney had a few years on you. Did he also do all his own stunts?

Hart [laughs]: Yeah, what there was. He was a wrestler, an Olympic wrestling coach. Did you ever see *Of Mice and Men*? Then you know he was a giant, husky, strong guy. And, in *Hawkeye*, he still was. We'd have all these Indian battles, and the producers would get these poor kids out from Toronto who wanted to get in the movies. They'd come out there, not dressed for the cold or anything, and they'd have to fight Chaney and me. Chaney would be about three sheets to the wind, and he'd grab these kids up and slam 'em into a tree...! [Laughs] And one day the "Indians" quit fighting, they wouldn't fight any more!

CM: And in general—you two running over hill and dale and that sort of thing—he could keep up with you?

Hart: Yeah, yeah. But neither one of us could see too well—I needed glasses. We'd

be way down in the forest and there'd be a mark they wanted us to trot up to. Chaney would say, "Can you see the mark?" And I'd say, "I'm not sure...I think maybe I can see the mark..." [Laughs] But once they started shooting, as we got closer, we could see the mark. That was kind of funny.

CM: What hours did you work?

Hart: We had to leave for the studio at six, so I'd get up about five to have a little breakfast. Chaney would hit my door about 5:30 and have a couple stugs out of the bottle, and we'd jump in his truck and off we'd go. We wouldn't get back until dark. Then, as winter came and snow was all over—hell, it was damn cold, yeah!

I'll tell you one thing Chaney and I did that was a lot of fun. In those days, the Blue Laws were enforced in Toronto—there was absolutely nothing to do on Sunday, except go to church! No movie theaters, no stores, no nothing. The only entertainment was, they had a double-header Junior A hockey game. Now, Junior A was like the minors in baseball, but these guys jumped from Junior A to the pros [the good guys did]. They had teams from all the little towns all around, and they played a double-header every Sunday afternoon. So Chaney and I would go to that, and we got to be real hockey fans! It was wonderful.

CM: I read in one of your old interviews that Chaney was the best man at your wedding.

Hart: It was a Friday, and I had to work [in an episode of *Hawkeye*]. It was a mine cave-in scene, and the director knew I was gonna go get married, but he kept shunting it over and over and doing all kinds of junk to make me late. That director was a real...well, I won't get into that. I finally got home, got in the shower, put on a suit and got going. And Chaney came with me—he was the best man.

There's a snowstorm, and I have to drive about 30 miles to this church in another little city. And of course, as I told you, Chaney drank a fifth by noon and a fifth by six o'clock every day. He had the ring—you know, the best man's supposed to have the ring. I'm driving along and I say, "Chaney, you got the ring?" He just looks at me and he says, "I got the ring." Doesn't show it to me. You're a little nervous when you're gonna go to get married, so we go another five or ten miles and I say, "Chaney, you sure you got the ring?" "I got the ring." Again, he doesn't show it to me, he doesn't put his pocket or anything [laughs]. Well, we get to the church and I go up to the minister who was going to perform the ceremony, and I tell him, "I don't know whether this guy's got the ring or not!" The minister said, "Don't worry, I've got one if he doesn't." Anyway, everything went very well, Chaney did have the ring—but the son of a bitch wouldn't show me!

CM: The Neufelds—what did you like about working with them?

Hart [after a pause]: Nothin' in particular! [Laughs] They had Sam, Sig and Stanley, three Neufelds. Old Sam Neufeld, the director—oh, he got the job done, because he'd directed a million things. Chaney and I tried to make friends with him, but we gave up. Well, he was just a weird guy. He was okay to work with, but socially he was awful—just terrible. Chaney had him to dinner, and that was the end of that [laughs]! But the producer, Sig Neufeld, was a pretty

good guy, and Stanley, the nephew, was a wonderful guy. They let him direct the last episode, and he was very good. He went on to become a big shot with Orion. I got into writing and I had a wonderful script and I took it to him, and he loved it. But he couldn't get the thing going, and then Orion just disintegrated. I don't know where Stanley went to.

When *Hawkeye* was first released, the first year, it was in the top 20, which is unheard of. And these asses—including Mr. Fromkess, whom I liked, he was quite a gentleman—they somehow screwed it up. They all got greedy, I guess. We made 38 episodes—it was a very good little series. Most of the stories were excellent and they were great little shows. And of course Toronto was the acting capital of Canada in those days, so we had a wonderful pool of supporting actors who came out and did a shot on *Hawkeye*. As I told you, that's how I got married [laughs]!

CM: How did the producers "screw it up"? Did they hold out for too much money?

Hart: I have no idea. But when a show's in the Top 20, it's a success! And they weren't paying Chaney and me worth a damn anyway, so we figured the show was going to go on and we'd get a nice raise and we were happy as hell. I bought a nice house near a golf course (I don't play golf), and I wanted to have a nice place for my mother to live while I went back to Canada to make more. And the series was cancelled—at just disappeared—and I wound up workin' on *Rozelle* [a semi-regular minor player] for peanuts! It was really terrible.

CM: Did you keep in touch with Chaney after the cancellation?

Hart: Yeah, we kept in touch a little bit. My wife and I went to see him once on a ranch and oh, he got so drunk it was just awful. My wife and I got the hell out of there.

CM: His ranch?

Hart: Or somebody's ranch he was livin' on. And then he wanted to buy a fishing boat, and he wanted me to run the fishing boat. Well, that was nice...but that isn't what I was tryin' to do [laughs].

CM: A lot of folks still remember you very fondly from *Hawkeye*.

Hart: I go around to conventions and they always like to have a panel discussion. They get several hundred people in the audience in a little auditorium, and whoever the stars are sit up in front and take questions. It was the funniest thing: I was at a convention, I don't know where the hell it was, somewhere in the East, and right next to our Q&A room was a funeral parlor. And while we were in there, they started playing the music and they were having a funeral over there! Anyway, we carried on and answered questions, and some kid in the back was waving his hand. I said, "Okay, what's your question?" And he said, "Hey, Hawkeye—did Chaney ever turn into a monster on ya?" I said, "Yeah. Every day at five o'clock!" [Laughs]

CM: When you look at episodes of *Hawkeye* today, how well do you think they hold up?

Hart: Good. Very good. People love 'em. *Hawkeye* was really fun. I made a lot of wonderful friends in Toronto, and I really had a hell of a nice time.—



# REEL GOOD

## FILM REVIEWS

### INDIAN FILMS A-Z

by **BOB CHINN**

**AA AB LAUT CHALEN** (1999) Rishi Kapoor 159 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Rajesh Khanna, Akshaya Khanna, Aishwarya Rai, Suman, Jaspat Bhat, Paresh Rawal. Highly enjoyable plot revolves around Rohan (Akshaya Khanna), a young graduate who, frustrated by the lack of job opportunity in India decides to go to America to seek his fortune. He manages to raise the money for the trip over and arrives in the United States full of hope and expectation, only to find life to be much more difficult than he had expected. With the compassionate help of members of the local Indian community he manages to survive. They help him to find employment as a cab driver and thanks to this job he meets a fellow expatriate, a beautiful young girl named Pooja (Aishwarya Rai), who becomes very fond of him. Rohan, however, has his mind, if not his heart, set on an Indian American girl who offers the promise of citizenship and wealth. It is not long before he discovers he has made the wrong choice. This picture shows the struggles faced by young Indian immigrants trying to make it in America. Former Miss World Aishwarya Rai is very fetching in her role, and the film is bolstered by a strong supporting cast.

**AAKHRI DAAO** (1979) K. Salim 140 min., Color, Hindi \*\*1/2 Saira Banu, Jeetendra, Danny Dangoor, Padma Khanna, Ranjeet, Satyen Kapoor, Ifekhar, Ramesh Deo, Amarjeet, Mohan Choti, Pinchoo Kapoor, Makhol, Rajn Kapoor, Ratan Gaurang. The best thing about this routine low-budget '70's action film is a young Danny Dangoor as the villain, Sawant. The story is about a lock expert, Ravi (Jeetendra) who is capable of cracking any safe. He is set up by Sawant and his beautiful accomplice, Julie (Padma Khanna) to open a safe that contains a rich man's valuables. When the man returns home unexpectedly Sawant kills him and sets Ravi up as the murderer by knocking him out and leaving him at the scene of the crime. Ravi regains consciousness just in time to escape. At the train station he runs into an old friend who has just quit his job as manager at the remote Nani Estate, a lumber camp in an isolated area of the country. Ravi shows up there and gets the job as well as the estate owner's tempestuous daughter, Rina (Saira Banu). Just as Ravi has adapted to life at the remote hill station Sawant shows up to blackmail him into doing another job. A pedestrian effort, at best, but the final fight scene in the mud during a raging storm is pretty exciting.

**AAKROSH** (1980) Govind Nihalani 141 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Smita Patil. Amrish Puri, Arvind Deshpande, Mohan Agashe, Achyut Patil,

Nana Palskar, Bhagyashree Koinis, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Vibhag Nayak. On December 25, 1978 near the village of Kondachiwadi the body of a young Adivasi lady named Nagi Lahanya (Smrita Patil) was found in a well. It was determined that she had died on the 24th or 25th, between 9pm and 5am. Her husband, Bhiku Lahanya (Om Puri) is accused of the murder and arrested. Thus begins Cinematographer Govind Nihalani's first directorial effort, and an admirable one it is. Utilizing extreme close ups of faces and highly dramatic lighting to create a mood of suspense and paranoia, he succeeds in making a powerful cinematic statement. Nihalani chronicles the efforts of the government appointed lawyer Baskar Kulkarni (Naseeruddin Shah) as he attempts to defend the tribal who will not utter a word in his defense. Kulkarni's investigation puts his own life in danger as he discovers the shocking truth. He learns that Lahanya's wife's death resulted when she was raped and abused by a group of prominent local politicians and businessmen during a party in which she worked as a servant. He also uncovers a conspiracy between the police and his own mentor, the prosecuting attorney (Amrish Puri) to falsify evidence and testimony to cover up the affair. This is a realistic art film and there is no happy ending, but you will see a superb performance from Om Puri, who utters less than perhaps a dozen words in the whole picture, as well as a standout job of acting by Naseeruddin Shah.

**AANCHAL** (1980) Anil Ganguly 140 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Rajesh Khanna, Rakhee Gulzar, Rekha, Prem Chopra, Amol Palekar, Lila Mishra, Shumai, Danesh Himat, Ramana Sachdev, Sarita Devi, Asit Sen, Swapna Guha, Amol Sen, Deepar. Colorful rural comedy that verges on the slapstick but is enjoyable nonetheless because of the various village characters it depicts. Shambulu (Rajesh Khanna) is a somewhat naive and glibly rustic who does all the work in the family sugarcane fields while elder brother Kishan (Amol Palekar) takes care of the business end. Tulsi (Rekha) is the feisty village milkmaid who Shambulu takes a shine to. Jagan (Prem Chopra) provides both the comedy relief and the villainy. He has a penchant for spying on



Kishan's attractive but virtuous wife Shanti (Rakhee Gulzar) while she's bathing. When Shanti repulses Jagan's untoward advances, he doesn't take the rejection lightly, formulating a devious plot to possess her. He sets about setting brother against brother by spreading a vicious and untrue rumor that Shanti is having an affair with her brother-in-law Shambulu. Rakhee and Rekha were without a doubt two of the most attractive women in the Indian cinema of this period.

**AAP AYE BAHAAAR AYE** (1971) Mohan Kumar 128 min., Color, Hindi \*\*1/2 Rajendra Kumar, Sadhana, Mumtaz Begum, Rajendranath, Raj Mehra, Prem Chopra, Bobby, Meena T., Kamal Deep, Madhu Apte, June, Subhash, Sarita Devi, Khodha Baba, Surinder, Prem Kumar. Rohit (Rajendra Kumar), the owner of a forest and a lumber company travels to his holdings in Rannagar where he meets the forest officer's daughter Neena (Sadhana). The meeting leads to a case of love at first sight between the two of them. After a whirlwind courtship they gain the permission of their respective parents and a beautiful destiny seems assured. At the engagement ceremony Rohit's good friend Kumar recognizes Neena as the girl who had refused him arranged marriage proposal without so much as even looking at his picture. Angered at what he considered to be her arrogance by unknowingly dishonoring him in this manner, Kumar gets drunk and rapes Neena. Rohit pursues the fleeing Kumar and in the ensuing fight he blinds the rapist in one eye. Neena subsequently discovers she is pregnant and tries to kill herself, but Rohit prevents her from doing this by pledging his eternal love no matter what happens. He persuades her to marry him in spite of the fact that she's going to bear another man's child. Having decided to face the future with courage and faith in each other, they are married and Neena gives birth to a son. Rohit loves the boy and raises him as his own, and the three of them live a happy and fulfilled life until Kumar, having escaped from prison, shows up on the scene.

**AAR PAAR** (1954) Guru Dutt 146 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Guru Dutt, Shyama, Shakila, Johnny Walker, Jagdish Sethi, Noor, Beer Sakhuja, Rashid Khan. Innovative Guru Dutt film which featured revolutionary techniques for its time in the integration of songs into the motion picture narrative. Once thought to have been a relatively minor Dutt film, over the years it has become somewhat of a classic even though it is essentially just a light-hearted screwball comedy about a romance between taxi driver Kalu (Dutt) and the boss' daughter Nicky (Shyama). The great songs from the film have achieved



sort of a cult status. Particularly memorable is the catchy melody of the song 'Ye Lo Main Haari Piya', sung by Dutt's wife, the great singer Geeta Dutt.

**AASHIRWAD (1968)** Hrishikesh Mukherjee  
Color, Hindi \*\*\* Ashok Kumar, Sanjeev  
Kumar, Sumita Sanyal, Veenaa, Sajin, Abhi  
Bhattacharya

Interesting melodrama about Shivrath  
(Ashok Kumar), the music-loving husband of  
an aristocratic land-owner who  
brutally exploits her. Unfathomable  
tenants – even going so far as to  
burn down their village when they  
are unable to pay the rent. The only joys in  
Shivrath's life come from his  
little daughter and the time he  
spends studying

and recording the folk songs of these  
peasants. When his wife's estate manager  
kidnaps one of the peasant girls, Shivrath  
accidentally kills him while trying to free the  
captive girl and is sentenced to a long term in  
prison. After spending many years in jail, he  
learns that the young prison doctor he has  
befriended is going to be married to a young  
lady who turns out to be his daughter. He  
spies on their relationship from afar, not  
wanting to reveal who he is for fear of  
embarrassing her. His release comes just  
before his daughter's wedding, but he falls ill  
and is rushed to the prison infirmary for  
emergency care. Even though he's dying, he  
manages to reach the village in time for his  
daughter's wedding. Mingling among the  
untouchables and beggars, Shivrath manages  
to give the bride his blessing without  
revealing his true identity.

**AATISH (1994)** Sanjay Gupta 175 min.,  
Color, Hindi \*\*\* Sanjay Dutt, Raveena  
Tandon, Atul Agnihotri, Karishma Kapoor,  
Gulshan Grover, Shakti Kapoor. This one  
gets its rating as being a definitive example of  
popular mainstream Indian entertainment.  
It's a melodrama with all the attendant twists  
and turns, a crime story with killings and  
betrayals, a comedy with typical Indian  
humor, a love story with all the requisite  
misunderstandings and reconciliations, and,  
of course, don't forget the songs. The story  
goes something like this: As a child Baba is  
forced to kill a man to save his mother's  
honor. His mother takes him to a gangster  
named Uncle (Ajit) for protection. Baba  
begins working for him, giving over all the  
money he makes to the support of his mother  
and younger brother. The grown up Baba  
(Sanjay Dutt) becomes the right hand man of  
Uncle's underworld empire. The left-hand  
man is Baba's childhood buddy Nawab  
(Aditya Pancholi), a devoutly religious young  
man who happens to be a cold-blooded killer.  
There is a strong male bonding theme to the  
Baba-Nawab relationship, a subplot  
borrowed directly from John Woo's "A Better  
Tomorrow." Also borrowed from the  
aforementioned film is the subplot of Baba's  
younger brother Avi (Atul Agnihotri), who  
graduates from the police academy to  
discover that his brother is on the wrong side  
of the law. There is a beautiful and extremely  
effective monochrome prologue sequence  
under the titles at the beginning of the film.

**ABHIMAAN (1973)** Hrishikesh Mukherjee  
130 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Amitabh  
Bachchan, Jaya Bhaduri. Real life married  
couple Bachchan and Bhaduri star together in  
an almost made-to-order love story about a  
famous pop singer (Amitabh Bachchan) who  
returns to his home village where he is  
captivated when he hears the beautiful voice of  
Uma (Jaya Bhaduri), the daughter of a  
retired music teacher. They meet, fall in love  
and marry, eventually recording successfully  
together as a duet. Unfortunately, Uma is  
clearly the superior singer. She is persuaded  
to record as a solo artist, and becomes highly  
successful. Problems arise when Uma's  
popularity eclipses that of her husband. An  
interesting study of jealousy, with an  
uncharacteristically natural and unaffected  
performance by leading man Bachchan.  
There is a good deal of great music as well as  
heart rending melodrama making for a  
satisfying viewing experience all around.

**ACHANAK** Nareesh Malhotra 155 min.,  
Color, Hindi \*\*\* Govinda, Manisha Koirala,  
Farha, Rahul Roy, Paresh Rawal, Dilip Dalal  
This film runs the gamut from love story to  
action thriller, with chunks of traditional  
melodrama and slapstick comedy thrown in  
for good measure. The story concerns a  
seemingly loyal family retainer who unfolds  
an insidious plot to take over a family's  
fortune. It's one of those Indian movies that  
tries to throw in just about everything but the  
kitchen sink, mixing genres almost from  
scene to scene, more often than not without  
successfully hitting the right notes to click as  
a cohesive whole. This is the problem, of  
course, when film scripts are written around  
the talents and limitations of specific actors  
and actresses, rather than developing a  
project for the sake of artistic creativity.  
Watch for brief cameos by Shatrughn Khan  
and Sanjay Dutt more or less playing  
themselves.

**ADALAT (1958)** Kalidas B&W, Hindi \*\*\*  
Nargis, Pradeep Kumar, Pran, Achla Sachdev,  
Jawahar Kaul, Yakub, Munad, Protima Devi,  
Paro, Kamal, Daya Devi, Minoo Mumtaz,  
Kusum, Roop Mala, Gaynder Narula, Ramail,  
Sagar, Uma Dutt,  
Baldev, Iqbal Misra,  
Ravi Kari. This  
Indian cinema classic  
is an old fashioned  
melodrama about a  
college girl, Nirmala  
(Nargis), who  
unwittingly gets a job  
as a teacher in a so-  
called music institute  
which turns out to be a  
front for a prostitution  
ring run by the  
villainous Kendamath  
(Pran). When the ring



is busted by the police Nirmala is disgraced –  
guilt by association – in spite of the fact that  
she is still chaste. Since she has seemingly  
brought dishonor to her family her mother  
dies and Nirmala is forced to leave home.  
She takes a job in Allahabad as a companion to  
the ailing wife of a wealthy Rajput Thakur,  
Rambir Singh, only to find that his only son,  
Rajendra (Pradeep Kumar) is the man she  
was in love with in college. Love between the  
two blossoms, but unfortunately he's off to  
England to complete his post-graduate law  
studies. Before he leaves he and Nirmala are

secretly married in the temple – but he  
doesn't get a chance to tell his parents about  
this. When Nirmala becomes pregnant the  
Thakur throws her out of the house –  
discounting her pleas that she is his  
daughter-in-law as a slanderous lie in her  
attempt to get her hands on the family  
fortune. His beliefs are reinforced when  
Kendamarth shows up and claims that she's his  
wayward wife. Nirmala manages to escape  
from the slimy Kendamarth's clutches and get a  
job as a nurse in a maternity hospital until  
she, herself, gives birth to her own son. But  
Kendamarth shows up again, this time with a  
letter from Thakur Rambir Singh, descendant  
of Lord Rama himself, which totally  
destroys Nirmala's character by parroting  
all the lies led to him by Kendamarth. The  
hospital throws her out and Kendamarth  
kidnaps Nirmala and her baby, holding them  
prisoner in a house of prostitution where she  
is forced to sing in return for milk for her  
child. Eventually she manages to get her son  
smuggled out of the brothel and into the  
hands of her friend, the head nurse of the  
maternity hospital, who raises the child as  
her own. He grows up to be a successful  
barrister who ends up as the prosecutor  
against Nirmala when she is put on trial for  
finally killing Kendamarth to save Rajendra's  
life. Her trial leads to a heart-wrenching  
conclusion.

**AGNEEPATH (1990)** Mukul S. Anand 167  
min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* 1/2 Amitabh Bachchan,  
Madhavi, Mithun Chakrabarty, Neelam,  
Danny Denzonga.

When the school teacher of an island village  
is killed by local gangsters, his young son and  
wife are forced  
to migrate to the  
mainland.  
Struggling to  
make a living in  
the city slums,  
the child  
becomes a  
shoeshine boy  
who eventually  
grows up to be a  
powerful  
gangster bent  
on revenge  
against all those  
who have  
wronged him.  
A violent



showdown at a gasoline station is the catalyst  
of the things that are to come. A superior  
Good Bad Guy vs. Bad Bad Guy epic boasting  
not only an excellent script, but stylish  
direction and superior performances by a  
great cast of actors. In spite of the fact that he  
is cast in an all-too-familiar role, Bachchan  
invests his part with high energy and  
believability. All in all, an exciting, well-  
filmed action filled drama with an  
unforgettable protracted bloody and  
explosive finale.

**AGNI NATCHATHIRAM (1988)** Mani  
Ratnam 146 min., Color, Tamil \*\*\* Prabhu,  
Karthik, Amala, Nirosha, G. Umashathi,  
Janakiraj, V.K. Ramaswamy, Jayachitra,  
Sumitra, Vijayakumar, Tara. Story of rivalry  
between two half brothers who have the  
same father but different mothers. Their  
father is a Judge (Vijayakumar), who  
maintains two separate households for his  
respective first and second wives. Gautham

Vishwanath (Prabhu), the son by the first wife is a cop. Ashok Vishwanath (Karthik)



the son by the second wife, is unable to get a job and becomes a layabout, hanging out with a motorcycle gang. Their mutual hatred for each other forms the crux of a plot that tries to steer clear of the numerous clichés that abound in the brother against brother type of film. There are some memorable scenes: notably, a highly suggestive autoerotic song picturized set in a sunken pool, and a knock down, drag out fight between the two brothers which takes place in the midst of a herd of stampeding horses. The film is highlighted by quick cuts and music video imagery, and is a significant example of Raitam's developing style. Unfortunately, the Pyramid DVD was mastered from a very poor print – the original negative shows significant heat damage and color deterioration – with the explanation that it was the only available source material. Still, we should consider ourselves fortunate to have this rare film available in any form.

**AGNI SAKSHI** (1990) Paro Ghosh 135 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Nana Patekar, Jackie Shroff, Manisha Koirala. Suraj (Jackie Shroff) is a wealthy shipping tycoon who falls in love with Shubhangi (Manisha Koirala). Although Shubhangi initially resists his advances, she eventually gives in and they are married. On their honeymoon at a seaside resort they run into Vishwanath (Nana Patekar), a mysterious, seemingly dangerous man who claims to be her husband. Is he or isn't he becomes the question here, and Suraj is eventually forced



to sort out everything to arrive at a shocking and unexpected truth. There are some definitely chilling moments, and believable acting by all three leads tends to elevate this film above its numerous counterparts. The result is a taut suspense thriller that features some picturesque location photography in what was formerly Portuguese India.

**AJOOBA** (1991) Shashi Kapoor 178 min., Color, Hindi \*\* Amitabh Bachchan, Rishi Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Sonam, Shammii Kapoor, Dara Singh, Sayeed Jafrey, Dalip Tahil, Tinnu Anand, Sushma Seth, Tej Sapru, Amrish Puri. After the birth of his son, the throne of the Sultan of Baharistan (Shammi Kapoor) is usurped by the evil, Satan worshipping Grand Vizier (Amrish Puri), who does away with the Sultan and the Queen at

sea. The infant prince, however, is saved by a dolphin who brings him ashore where he is found by a peasant fisherman. The Grand Vizier blames the deaths on a visiting dignitary from Hind, Amir Khan (Sayeed Jafrey). Amir Khan is imprisoned, but when the Vizier's henchmen try to kill his pregnant wife, she is saved by an elephant who happens onto the scene. The late Sultan's child grows up to be the masked avenger, Ajooba (Amitabh Bachchan), while in the forests of Hind Amir Khan's daughter grows to womanhood as the beautiful Rukhsana (Dimple Kapadia). Although Ajooba considers the dolphin who saved him to be his mother, she is, for all practical purposes, still a fish. Therefore when a blind beggar woman he had saved offers him the love of a mother, he readily accepts. Along with his friend Hassan (Rishi Kapoor), a poor potter who is in love with the Vizier's daughter, Princess Henna,

Ajooba continues to fight the injustices perpetrated by the usurper's reign of terror. In the meantime, Rukhsana journeys to Baharistan in search of her father, but is captured by the Vizier's only son, Prince Altai, and thrown into the prison cell next to her father. Ajooba rescues them, and father and daughter are united. Amir Khan discovers that the Sultan managed to escape death those many years ago and now, suffering from amnesia, wandered around the countryside of Hind as a faith healer. In another surprise revelation, the blind beggar woman is, in reality, the Queen – she, too having survived death at sea. In a final showdown with the forces of evil, Ajooba removes the sword of invincibility from the stone in which the Sultan had sheathed it, proving that he is the Crown Prince of Baharistan. This Indo-Russian co-production is a sword and sorcery fantasy featuring some great location shots in what was formerly the Soviet Union.

**AKAYLA** (1991) Ramesh Sippy 177 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Amitabh Bachchan, Jackie Shroff, Meenakshi Sheshadri, Amrita Singh, Aditya Pancholi, Kiran, Juneja, Keith Stevenson, Shashi Kapoor, Helen, Mahesh Anand, Kanwaljit Singh, Mangal Dhillon. Amitabh Bachchan plays Police Inspector Vijay Varma, a Dirty Harry type cop with a slight drinking problem who drives around in a yellow Volkswagen bug named Rampryan. Inspector Varma is a much-decorated seasoned professional who likes to do things his own way. He drinks in an attempt to forget that he sacrificed his love for Seema (Meenakshi Sheshadri) to his best friend, Shekhar (Jackie Shroff), who was also deeply in love with her. For years Vijay struggled through a meaningless and hollow life, kept going by drink and the sole purpose of raising his younger brother, Ajay. Then one day he meets Sapna, a lovely sweet woman who is all alone in the world. The main plot of the story centers on Vijay's



continuing battle with arch-villain Tony Braganza who, by using his half-witted identical twin brother Jojo as an alibi, has been literally getting away with murder and other terrible crimes, making a complete mockery of the justice system. That is, until Varma puts one and one together and comes up with two. He confronts the evil pair and arrests them, but Braganza escapes from prison and goes on a vicious rampage with his demented twin, first killing Shekhar and Seema, then Vijay's innocent younger brother Ajay and his lovely bride Neetu on their wedding day. Vijay swears revenge, resigning from the police force when they try to hold him back from seeing justice done. This film attempts to be a scathing indictment of a legal system that favors the criminal's rights over the victim's tragedy.

**AKELE HUM AKELE TUM** (1995) Mansoor Khan 160 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Amitabh Khan, Manisha Koirala, Master Adil. A "Kramer vs. Kramer" type tearjerker that really tugs at the heartstrings. The story centers around Rohit (Amir Khan), a talented young composer who marries an aspiring young singer, Kiran (Manisha Koirala). After the birth of their son her duties as mother and housewife prevent her from pursuing the career which meant so much to her, and her hopes of ever doing so are all but dashed by her husband, who is intent on attaining his own goals. Frustrated and desperately in search of her own identity, Kiran runs away, leaving Rohit and their young son (Master Adil), to fend for themselves. Forced into the role of a single parent, Rohit struggles to raise his son (Master Adil) as best as he can, even at the expense of his own career. He even goes so far as to sell his own original musical compositions to a singer who claims sole credit for the songs. Rohit's songs become popular and win awards, but all the benefits and glory go to a person that doesn't deserve it, leaving Rohit to continue struggling in anonymity. Meanwhile, Kiran's talent is finally recognized by the right people, and she becomes not only a successful recording artist, but a major film star as well. Now rich and famous, she goes to court to gain custody of her son. Highly recommended.

**ALAAP** (1977) Hrishikesh Mukherjee Color, Hindi \*\*\* Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, Chhaya Devi, Asrani, Farida Jalal, Manmohan Krishna, Lily Chakaborty, Om Prakash, Yuni, Parvati, Vijay Sharma, Shashi Kumar. Beautifully photographed Hrishikesh Mukherjee melodrama with Amitabh Bachchan playing Aloke, the younger son of a powerful lawyer (Om Prakash) who rules his upper-class family like an iron-fisted tyrant. When he discovers that Aloke would rather study classical Indian music than follow in his footsteps as a lawyer, he finds a legal loophole to have his son's music teacher evicted from the property she had purchased with her life savings. Aloke rebels against his father for this injustice by turning his back on a life of privilege and settling in the slums as a common laborer. He marries Radhaya (Rekha), a girl of lower caste, and they have a son. Angered at the blow to his social position and honor, Aloke's father decides to teach his rebellious son a lesson by using his power to deprive his son of employment, hoping that he will learn his lesson. Forced to live in abject poverty, facing insurmountable



odds because of his father's blind and unjust cruelty. Aloke contracts tuberculosis. But his spirit remains unbroken, and he struggles on until he can struggle no more. His father learns too late the dreadful wrong he has done.

**AMAR AKBAR ANTHONY (1977)** Manmohan Desai 175 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Vinod Khanna, Rishi Kapoor, Amritabh Bachchan, Neetu Singh, Shabana Azmi, Parveen Babi, Nirupa Roy, Jeevan, Pran, Yusuf, Mukri, Nazir Hussain, Kamal Kapoor, Hercules, Shweta, Protima Devi, Mulchand, Helen, Nadira, Madhumati, Rajeev. Manmohan Desai's 1977 classic is a totally engaging, old-fashioned action melodramatic fantasy that is fast moving and fun to watch from beginning to end. As the film opens Kishanlal (Pran) is released from prison where he served time for a crime committed by his employer Robert (Jeevan), a cruel and devious crime lord. Robert promised to take care of Kishanlal's wife, Bharati (Nirupa Roy) and children while he was in prison but reneged on the deal. Kishanlal returns home to find his children starving and his wife suffering from tuberculosis. When he confronts Robert he is humiliated by the villain but Kishanlal manages to flee with a box full of gold. In the ensuing chaos and confusion of the chase he is separated from his wife, who becomes blind when she is hit by a falling tree, and he is forced to abandon his children for their own safety. Surviving a near fatal car crash Kishanlal returns for his children to find them gone. The eldest of the three boys is found by a Hindu cop, and he grows up to become Amar (Vinod Khanna), a good, tough and honest police inspector like his father. A Muslim tailor comes across the youngest child who he raises and names Akbar (Rishi Kapoor). The other son ends up on the doorstep of a church where he is found and cared for by a Catholic priest. He grows up to become the pious hell-raiser Anthony (Amritabh Bachchan). And all this happens before the main titles are over. At the beginning of the story proper, the widow Bharati is run over by a car and ends up in a hospital. Three people are found who happen to have the matching blood type to save her life happen to be Amar the Hindu cop, Akbar the Muslim musician and Anthony the pious bootlegger. All three, of course, are unaware that they are actually brothers and the woman whose life they are saving is none other than their mother. Akbar is in love with one of the doctors at the hospital, Salma (Parveen Babi). Amar grows very fond of Laxmi (Shabana Azmi), a young girl he rescues from a forced life of crime. And Anthony falls in love with a girl he meets in church named Jenny (Neetu Singh) who is unaware that Kishanlal, the crime lord who raised her actually stole her when she was a baby from her real father, Robert. A situation like this could lead to all sorts of possibilities, and indeed it does. This film is

credited with defining the persona of Amitabh Bachchan the superstar.

**AMBA (1990)** Mohan Kumar 161 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Shabana Azmi, Anil Kapoor, Meenakshi Seshadri, Kiran Juneja, Janwarlal Singh, Sujit Kumar, Sudhir Pandey, Master Rajat Dube, Rajan Sepp, Satish Shah, Jaya Mathar, Kamal Deevy, Yunus Parvez, Mangal Dhillon, Upsana Singh. Shabana Azmi can brighten even the most routine mass-audience film. Such is the case with this Hindi melodrama about a beloved village matriarch, Ma Amba (Shabana Azmi) who lives with her two sons: Rajinder, who is married to Prabha and has a young son, Bhikku (Master Rajat Dube), and Suraj, the village roustabout (Anil Kapoor). Her daughter-in-law Prabha is the daughter of the district Sarpanch, Jasbir Singh, a corrupt Thakur landowner who is customarily re-elected every year. Whereas Jasbir Singh cheats peasants of their land, Amba and her sons share their crops and fortune with the villagers. But tragedy engulfs Amba's family when her hard working elder son Rajinder, in a moment of weakness, attempts to rape their servant girl, inadvertently causing her death. Amba must stand by all her principles and beliefs to muster the strength to testify against her son so that justice might be done. While this is obviously a star vehicle for Azmi, one must remember that there are stars and there are actresses. Shabana Azmi is that rare combination of both.

**AME PARDESI PAAN (1977)** Mahesh Desai 136 min., Color, Gujarati \*\*\*1/2 Mahesh Desai, Ragini, Arvind Panyu, Sangeta, Kishore, Janwarlal. This Gujarati melodrama is watchable in spite of its somewhat disconcerting cinema-verite camera style and occasional theatrical overacting. A terrible drought forces a migration of villagers from Kutch to a neighboring kingdom where they are welcomed by the Crown prince Nagwalo (Mahesh Desai) and the king, who lets them settle on some land by the river. Their chief Badawala's beautiful daughter Nagmini (Ragini) and Nagwalo fall in love with each other - but a jealous wealthy rival, Harsul, contrives to separate them. Beautiful scenic location shots are intercut with some rather tacky studio interiors. One of the highlights of the film is an interesting tribal dance sequence.

**AMIR GARIB (1974)** Mohan Kumar 148 min., Color, Hindi \*\* Dev Anand, Hema Malini, Tanuja, Sujit Kumar, Ranjeet, Mohan Choti, Premnath, Raj Mehra, Sulochana, Mhemood, Jr., Master Ravi, Bunti, Chamanpuri, Birbal, Mumtaz Begum, Ram Mohan. Bombay police are baffled by a series of major robberies perpetrated against a select group of wealthy men. Mani (Dev Anand) masquerades as a singer and musician but is secretly a shadowy figure

known as the Con Man, who heads a gang of likeable thieves who are behind all the robberies. He is pursued by a girl who is in love with him named Sona (Hema Malini), a pickpocket and thief who leads a gang of two street urchins. Sona robs from the rich to give to the poor in the slum in which she lives with her adopted mother. Sona still retains the childhood memory of her father dying of a heart attack caused by Daulatram, a trusted employee who cheated his business away from him, and she had sworn revenge for this and the poverty she had had to endure growing up. The Con Man blackmails the rich into spending their ill-gotten gains by feeding and subsidizing the poor. Daulatram, the wealthiest and most powerful of these businessmen, hatches a plan to have the poor pickpocket Sona masquerade as his long lost daughter in order to trap the "Con Man." She goes along with him for the money, but seems to have a plan of her own. It also turns out that the woman Sona has been living in poverty with and caring for as her own mother is, in reality, Mani's mother. This is a typical Dev Anand caper film with sliding doors, secret passages, hypnosis and other gimmicks that seem pretty dated even for the '70's, but if you're in the mood for a campy experience and you're not too particular, this one might fit the bill.

**AMRIT (1986)** Mohan Kumar 138 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Rajesh Khanna, Smrita Patil, Anura Irani, Diljitkaur, Anita Kanwar, Baby Guddu, Shafi Inamdar, Satish Shah, Rajesh Puri, Pradeep Saxena, Master Ashutosh, Rishabh Shukla. Smrita Patil, a world-class actress whose life was tragically short at the age of 31, shows her amazing versatility portraying a long-suffering grandmother in this moving, but often strident indictment of the abuse of elders. The widowed Kamla (Smrita Patil) spends her twilight years as a virtual slave, cooking and waiting on her son, and her abusive daughter-in-law and her wastrel brother. She lives in the storeroom of a house that was once her own. While taking her granddaughter to school she meets Amrit (Rajesh Khanna), a grandfather who takes his young grandson to school. He, too, is a widower forced to live with a miserly son and a shrewish daughter-in-law, who constantly humiliates and degrades him. Both sons have forgotten all of the sacrifices their parents have made for them while they were growing up. Now that they have reached old age both Amrit and Kamla are treated as burdens to be barely tolerated. Their only pleasure in life has been their grandchildren. When Kamla falls ill and is diagnosed with tuberculosis, the retired Amrit finds jobs as a day laborer lifting and carrying heavy material at construction sites to pay for her medical bills. He and his friends nurse Kamla back to health. Together, they gradually begin to search for a measure of pride in their lives. Aging matinee-idol Rajesh Khanna is perfectly cast in a role to which he brings a certain gruff dignity, infusing the part with subtle humor and joie de vivre. It is certainly one of his most sensitive performances.

Editor's note. This will be an on-going column by Bob Chinn. His own personal film reviews, starting with Indian Films. He will cover other genre's as well. The next issue will continue alphabetically with the Indian Films titles.

# THE men WHO WOULD BE BOND

by Mike  
Malloy

Fictional superspy James Bond is considered by some to be the greatest figure of 20th Century mythology. And that's a pretty good assessment; perhaps Bond's only noteworthy rival for the distinction is Superman, the caped, faster-than-a-speeding-bullet character of comic books.

Presented first in the novels of Ian Fleming and adapted for the big screen by Eon Films, the James Bond adventures — as important as they were to last century's pop culture — in a y

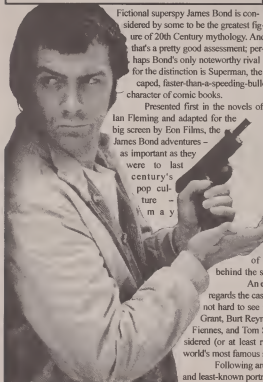


(and one who  
kinda was)

wind up being less legendary than the "making of Bond" production tales — that is, the stories behind the stories.

An especially myth-generating aspect of the Bond films regards the casting — or rather, the near-casting — of 007. And it's not hard to see why. Such high profile stars as Mel Gibson, Cary Grant, Burt Reynolds, Sam Neill, James Brolin, Hugh Grant, Ralph Fiennes, and Tom Selleck are some of the actors that have been considered (or at least rumored to have been considered) for the role of world's most famous secret agent.

Following are the closest of the near-misses, along with the first and least-known portrayal of the man for whom the world is not enough.



## BARRY NELSON



### CASINO ROYALE (1954)

Barry Nelson was Bond... kinda.

Most Bond fans know that an out-and-out Briton didn't play 007 until full-blooded limey Roger Moore stepped into the role (after Scotsman Sean Connery and Australian George Lazenby had their turns). But lesser known is the fact that an American embodied the first screen version of Bond.

On October 21, 1954 (eight years before Connery first played 007), American television audiences witnessed Barry Nelson playing "Jimmy" Bond in the *Climax!* anthology series' presentation of *Casino Royale*. Ian Fleming had sold the television rights to his best-selling 1953 novel for \$1,000 to CBS, and the network created an hour-long live TV *Royale*...with some major changes.

Bond, instead of working for Britain's MI6 spy division, is an American spy working for "Combined Intelligence." Felix Leiter, supposed to be Bond's American CIA buddy, is a British spy named Clarence Leiter. Bond's vodka martini is traded for a scotch and water. The genital torture is substituted with toe torture.

And the show's portrayal of Bond is none too faithful to the novel, as the character's trademark cool is replaced with hot-headed shouting and tough-guy snarling. Still, some of the novel's most memorable moments are adapted well for the television program, including the scene in which an enemy inconspicuously pokes his cane gun into Bond's spine at the baccarat table.

Film rights for *Casino Royale* were soon after sold by Fleming for \$6,000, and the story was finally brought to the big-screen as a nonsensical spoof in 1967. The 1954 TV version would have been entirely lost to motion picture history if not for a film vault worker noticing that the print of *Royale* he was about to destroy (in order to

make more room on the shelves) had a date other than '67 on it.

So Barry Nelson kinda was Bond. But post-Boomers will probably only know the actor for his part in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (his hotel manager hires the Jack Nicholson character to care for the Overlook).

## PATRICK MCGOOHAN



### DR. NO (1963)

Amongst Bond fans, it's no secret that Patrick McGeehan was offered the Bond role for 1963's *Dr. No* before it was awarded to Sean Connery. Indeed, McGeehan was one of only a few candidates considered seriously by Eon producers Albert "Cubby" Broccoli and Harry Saltzman; others were Cary Grant, James Mason, and Connery.

Although reports conflict as to why McGeehan declined the part, the most common story concerns McGeehan's moral objection to Bond's violence and womanizing. And this story seems to be backed up by McGeehan's longest-running role in the '60s: TV spy John Drake.

Drake, who appeared in two different television series entitled *Danger Man* (retitled *Secret Agent* for the U.S. TV market), did not carry a firearm and was never seen to bed a woman. Occasionally, a baddie would be killed in *Danger Man*, but generally Drake used his head instead of force. He would assume other identities, talk his way into situations, investigate, set up elaborate stakcours, etc. (though there was the obligatory fistfight in each episode). The Drake character was namelessly reprised for McGeehan's intellectual spy-meets-sci-fi mini-series, *The Prisoner*, one of the few true masterworks of television.

McGeehan was offered the Bond role at the end of the first *Danger Man* series, in 1961, and he may have also been considered in the late-1960s.

McGeehan has since become notorious for turning down choice film roles and working very infrequently in pictures (though he introduced himself to a new generation of fans when played the wicked king in *Braveheart*). He is also well-known for being a private person; when contacted by telephone for this article, the actor said he wasn't interested in talking about events that occurred 40 years ago.

## JOHN GAVIN



### DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER (1971)

In 1970, American actor John Gavin screen tested for Bond, was offered the part, accepted, and even had an inked deal to play 007. And yet he still never wore the tuxedo.

Sean Connery had quit the Bond series (for the first time) after 1967's *You Only Live Twice*, and he was replaced with Australian model George Lazenby for 1969's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Despite the fact that Lazenby was still getting the hang of acting while making the film, he was asked back for another installment (Lazenby said at a 2002 celebrity convention in North Hollywood that he was offered almost a million dollars under the table — on top of his salary — to return for a second Bond film).

But Lazenby decided not to continue as Bond. He told this writer, "By then I was a hippie, and the money didn't matter."

A scramble was on to find a 007 for the next film, *Diamonds are Forever*, which was scheduled to begin shooting in spring of '71. Adam West (TV's Batman) was considered, as was Roger Moore (he'd get his chance in '73), but neither was cast. Producers Saltzman and Broccoli went to America and screen tested many actors and settled on John Gavin, who was best known for his support-

ing roles in *Psycho* and *Spartacus*. Gavin signed a contract to be the next 007.

But United Artists president David Picker wasn't satisfied, and in February of '71 he flew to London to personally woo Sean Connery back to the role. Picker's irresistible offer included a million-dollar donation to Connery's Scottish International Education Trust and a chance for the actor to direct any non-Bond film of his choosing.

With Connery back in the fold, Gavin was paid \$50,000 (which may have been his full salary) to step down. And by one report, the actor even received residuals from *Diamonds* per his Screen Actors Guild contract.

But while Gavin's acting career experienced this disappointment, his off-camera endeavors flourished. He served as president of the Screen Actors Guild from 1971-1973 and became the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico in 1981.

For a possible indication of how John Gavin would have fared as Bond, there exists a 1968 Gavin-starring spy film entitled *OSS 117 Double Agent* (a.k.a. *Murder for Sale*). Gavin plays a secret agent posing as a hit man posing as a photographer.

## LEWIS COLLINS



### A VIEW TO A KILL (1985), ETC.

While his name doesn't ring many bells Stateside, Lewis Collins was a favorite (er, "favourite") pick in the U.K. for succeeding Roger Moore as Commander Bond in the 1980s. Collins often won reader polls in magazines and newspapers (though sometimes he placed second, behind Pierce Brosnan), and the British press liked him for the role.

So what made Collins such a front-runner for Bond in Britain? From 1977-1983,

Collins played Criminal Intelligence agent William Bodie on the popular U.K. action series *The Professionals*. Bodie was tough, violent, and cold — not unlike the Bond of Fleming's novels.

But Collins didn't hit it off well with a very important figure in the Bond film family — producer "Cubby" Broccoli. The actor interviewed with Broccoli in the early '80s and may have even screen tested. But as the story goes, Collins and Broccoli's personalities didn't mesh, so the *Professionals* star never got his chance.

Collins was, however, considered a contender for 007 for the remainder of the decade, both for Eon's Bond films and for Kevin McClory's un-produced alternate Bond films.

(On a personal note, your writer first saw Lewis Collins in a trilogy of low-budget, mid-80s mercenary films and thought, "This actor would make a fabulous James Bond." As it turned out, Collins was appearing in those films only because he had failed to snag the 007 part.)

With current Bond actor Pierce Brosnan announcing he'll do only one more 007 film after last year's *Die Another Day*, there's sure to be plenty of rumors, speculation and tales of would-be Bonds in the future.

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## ON LOCATION

There is much going on in Hollywood these days. The Kodak Center is bustling with the gigantic Elephant beacons, high up in the air yet unseen from the Boulevard. It is a mix of old time glamour with high end shops that are rumored to have \$30,000 a month rent. That can't be true, can it? But if it is, would explain why so many of the shops are going out of business so quickly. Who could afford such high overhead?

One of our writers, Chuck Zigmans of this issue's Terry Southern article has highly recommended Nate Nichols' new website ([www.hollywoodwalkof.com](http://www.hollywoodwalkof.com)) (no dash) is the third issue, and he just put it out. According to Chuck, "All of the articles are pretty great and Nate has a fantastic writing style." In fact, Nate Nichols (and his screenwriting partner John Cook) just wrote a screenplay called *Weird Baroque*, based on the graphic novel, that's in pre-production for Edward Pressman.

For those of you that love Bela Lugosi, the AF wire service recently put out a blurb about the new Dracula's Theme Park. However, it won't be built in the Transylvanian city of Sighisoara, but near Bucharest, Romania. Also, the theme park will be built around the historical Dracula instead of the Hollywood version. Yet when the article ran in the Chicago Sun-Times it displayed a picture of Bela as Dracula rather than the historical Vlad the Impaler. At least the Sun-Times got the right idea.

Remember the Hardware Wars? (see review in *Cult Movies Magazine* issue #37) They recently sent the coolest of cool silver lunch box and baseball hat. Soar away like the Hardware Wars collectible lunchbox. It has made life meaningful once again. You gotta get one of your own! [www.exclusivecollectibles.com](http://www.exclusivecollectibles.com)

**Sideshow Toys** They have the best movie character toys that I have seen and at the time of this writing are having deep discounts on many of their Monster characters. This means a savings of 25% to 75%.

Check out their website at [www.SideshowCollectibles.com](http://www.SideshowCollectibles.com). Founded in 1993 as Sideshow Productions, the company began as a provider of make-up effects, props and animatronic puppets for the film industry. The following year, Sideshow expanded and began to provide design and development services to toy manufacturers. Over the next four years, the Sideshow team developed toy lines for more than a dozen companies and was involved in hundreds of individual products.

In 1999, Sideshow began marketing its own line of collectible and specialty products under the Sideshow Toy brand. Quickly recognized as a quality manufacturer, Sideshow products have been highlighted in national trade and specialty toy publications where their Action Figures, 12" Dolls and polystyrene collectibles have been awarded "Best of the Year" by various trade publications.

Sideshow Toys currently manufactures licensed collectible products based on the following properties: The Lord of the Rings, Bond, Star Trek, The Simpsons, Universal Studios Classic Monsters, Monty Python's Holy Grail, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Jim Henson's Dark Crystal and the Muppets, Young Frankenstein, Outer Limits, Get Smart, Hogan's Heroes, Planet, Twilight Zone and Army of Darkness. I personally can vouch for the quality and accuracy of these collectible toys. Amongst my favorites are the Universal Studios Classic Monsters.

The Hollywood Walk of Fame is busy every month installing two or more Stars on the Walk of Fame. On January 30, actress Tippi Hedren was honored on the Hollywood Walk of Fame with the 2,213th star. Hedren became a household name after director Alfred Hitchcock discovered the former New York fashion model and debuted her in a

starring role in the classic film *The Birds*. Between her more than 30 films and numerous television appearances, Hedren has been involved in a variety of humanitarian and environmental causes, almost overshadowing her screen work.

In the upcoming issue we will introduce to you an up and coming artist, Krystopher Sapp. His unique and cult style art work is out of this world. *Cult Movies* went to the opening of his latest art show and the following week, everything was sold out. Much of his work is 3 dimensional and has life like moving parts, just make sure that you don't miss the next issue of *Cult Movies Magazine*!!!

I was most fortunate to make the acquaintance of Scott Schwartz through Krystopher Sapp. He is certainly one of Hollywood's baddest ass stars (and kinders). From his world to his famous George Clooney park in the movie *Ocean's Eleven* to his demonic presence in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. There will be a very intimate interview with him next issue as well.

Gary Bennet, is a writer in Hollywood that has recently joined our writing staff. Welcome Gary! Look for his name in upcoming issues of *Cult Movies*.

More to come from Hollywood. On Location! Believe me when I tell you that there is a lot more beneath the surface.

Recently, there was an article in the Hollywood Independent about the alleged back taxes that the American Cinematheque owes the city. The city of Los Angeles sold the Egyptian Theatre to the American Cinematheque for one dollar a few years back. It seems that the non-profit organization did not realize that they were still responsible for annual property taxes. They claim that they never received a bill from the city although the city claims to have sent the bill every year to them.

Hopefully this will get straightened out soon. Dennis Barak does a good job of programming and brings a wonderful array of films for those close enough to Hollywood to enjoy.

However, there does seem to be some confusion amongst

the rest of the staff. A few months ago, I read on their WISH LIST that they wanted a Beta SP deck. Having worked in the field a decade or so ago, it happened to have one that I no longer use. But when I offered it to them, I was told that they had no such need for such a dinosaur. Not understanding this response I inquired as to why it had appeared on their wishlist, only to met with a sharp remark that it was just too old and outdated. Feeling rather sheepish about my "misunderstanding" I left a message that I'd like to make a cash donation to their cause but no one ever returned my call. Guess they don't need money from this old dinosaur.

If you have any news to add to this column, email me at [cultmovies@aol.com](mailto:cultmovies@aol.com) or write to PO Box 1047 Hollywood, CA 90078-1047. If I use it, I will mention your name as the contributor.

See you next time! Coen Kiyonaga

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# Remembering Doris Wishman

SPECIAL FIRST PERSON REPORT BY

GINO COLBERT

I first heard of Doris Wishman in the early seventies when an issue of *Boxoffice Magazine* pictured a full-page ad for the movie *Deadly Weapons* starring Chesty Morgan and her twin "73's." It was quite a sight, so I showed it to friends at work who found it hysterical and it became the talk of the office. Several years later the film finally made it to Toledo's old Franklin Park Drive-in, so I grabbed my two cousins and headed to see the double bill of *Flesh Gordon* and this long awaited Doris Wishman film. I remember the voices being dubbed and Miss Morgan's character wearing the most unusual wardrobe and unbalanced colors. The whole movie seemed cheesy, but most sexploitation films at that time were. It was an interesting experience and my introduction to the world of Doris Wishman. I never imagined that one day I'd be working for this director.

Cut to: early 80's. I was living in NYC and working as a line producer for the last of the big porn filmmakers. A cinematographer on one of our shoots, C. Davis Smith, mentioned during casual conversation that he was prepping a horror film for Doris Wishman. I practically believed what I was hearing. I practically begged to meet this woman. I wanted to work on her set so bad, I told him I'd even volunteer. Chuck said she wasn't keen on meeting people, but the fact I was willing to work for free would definitely interest her. So a meeting was set.

Doris was working out of a cutting room on Sixth Avenue and 54th, across from the Ziegfeld Theatre. When I entered the room, I thought I was meeting someone's great grandmother. She was just a little old lady with an overpowering personality. She wanted to know why I was so anxious to meet her, so I explained I was a fan who truly admired her work. She seemed quite skeptical. We sat and she began to tell me a troubled story about her finances and asked if I'd like to invest in her movie. She also mentioned she discovered Tony LoBianco in one of her early films.

Doris was in the process of cutting a horror film she shot titled *A Night To Dismember*. It had tons of special effects,



which she began to play on her flatbed-editing table. There were clouds and thunder and lots of noise and people running around a graveyard covered with blood. She claimed most of the budget was spent on these effects and she was broke because of it. She also mentioned she wasn't a good business person. However, the film didn't have a main character or a beginning or end, and this is where I could be of help. "Could you help me find an actress, but I can't pay her anything? I need to get this done so I can move on to my next picture, which is about the Guardian Angels gang. They're going to let me film them. No one's ever made a movie about them before. Maybe you could help me write the script." Suddenly she mentioned another idea for a script, with the title "Lukey." She hollered out, "Lukey, Lukey!" "I like that name," she said. And she called it out again.

The mid-eighties were a time when many porn actresses wanted to crossover and go mainstream. A series of "B" pictures were shot in New York City giving them such an opportunity, so I mentioned this to Doris and the fact I had a porn star friend named Samantha Fox, a talented actress, whom I could introduce her to. "Will she work for free because I can't pay her anything?" I made the introduction and Miss Fox was

immediately cast in the role of an escaped mental patient, and everything seemed to fall into place. I was looking forward to being a mere production assistant on Doris' set.

A day later, Doris cried to Samantha Fox about how broke she was and asked if she could borrow a couple thousand dollars to complete the film. Fox then called me and asked if I had known Doris was going to do this. I almost fell over. At the time, I'd just met Chesty Morgan, who was performing at Show World, the old porn emporium on 42nd and 8th, so I asked her about Doris since she starred in two of her films. "Tell your friend not to loan her a cent. She'll never get a penny back." Who knew what went on between Doris and Chesty, but I felt I was in the middle of a not-so-professional situation since I made the introduction. I rang Samantha Fox and told her it probably wasn't a good idea since we didn't know Doris that well. I had no idea Fox would then call Doris and tell her what I'd said and that I'd spoken to Chesty. Shortly after my call, Doris rang and told me I couldn't work on her set, that I was trying to sabotage her film, that Chesty Morgan was a horrific person, and what right did I have to tell an investor not to invest? I nearly blew up. "I referred an actress to you and you hit her for money! You're the one who's unprofessional." We screamed back-and-forth. Finally I told her I felt taken advantage of and if this is how she makes contacts, she was not worth knowing. That was the end of the call. Moments later Doris phoned back: "You can work on the picture but don't cause any problems!" I had such a sour feeling about her at this point, I really didn't care if I worked on it or not. However, I wanted to be a part of it in a strange sort of way and see what it was like. I was 22 at the time and wanted as much experience as possible, and I'd worked for a lot worse.

The morning of the two-day shoot the crew of four met at the soundman's apt. on 45th and 8th. I helped load the car with the equipment - all of which the cameraman had borrowed from friends and equipment houses to help Doris out - and off we drove

to Forest Hills, where Doris was living in a highrise apartment complex. The day began with shooting the dialogue in Doris' living room, same room the Chesty Morgan features were shot. The Oriental furniture was covered in plastic; the apartment was cluttered and stuffy. As the day grew darker, we headed outside near the freeway underpass. Doris had Styrofoam grave markers as props, which looked like the real thing. And this is where the scene of Samantha Fox would take place as she ran around the graveyard looking crazed, covered with blood, axe in hand. I had no idea how this would tie into the story, as there was no script to be seen. In fact, Doris had a scribbled pad of notes, only one copy, which was her dialogue sheet as well. The day came to an end when everyone was exhausted. We'd worked a good 26 hours non-stop. We hopped in the car, Samantha Fox joining us, and Chuck the cameraman told us what time to meet him the next day at soundman Tony's apartment. I don't think we quite had a full eight-hour turnaround.

Day two: We jammed into the car and headed back to Doris' apartment to begin our last day. On this day I would be in a scene, playing a New York cabbie. In the very car that got us there, I got behind the wheel and pulled up to the back of Doris' building, which now had a sign reading: "Hospital Emergency Room." Samantha Fox would jump in the car as if she had just hailed my cab, though we'd find out later she actually escaped from the mental ward of the hospital. As she got in the vehicle, I'd turn around and say, "Hey lady, where you headed?" On cue, she'd pull out an axe, hit me on the back of my head, killing me, and take over the wheel. We shot this in record breaking time, as Samantha Fox gave me pointers on how to react when I saw the axe coming. Various exteriors were shot as well, wrapping all the outdoor stuff. When we returned inside Doris' apartment, everyone was exhausted and hungry. I remember Doris sitting down and grabbing a paper bag from the refrigerator, opening it and taking out her tuna sandwich. Everyone looked at her and she looked back, saying: "What! Am I supposed to feed everybody too?" In no time, Samantha Fox got on the phone and ordered pizzas, which she generously paid for.

More scenes continued in Doris' living room when a couple arrived, who I later found out were relatives she cast in her other films as well. Doris took her legal pad of scribbled notes, still writing dialogue, and positioned the actors. Even though Tony the soundman would record the sound, Doris made it clear the voices would

be dubbed later. I noticed she got lots of coverage of the person not talking, as if she planned on cutting to the face merely listening. At one point, Chuck the cinematographer said something to Doris about the shot, offering his advice, and she screamed: "Chuck, shut up! Tony, shut up!" At that point, the tension became its worst under the hand of Doris Wishman. Everyone merely wanted to leave at this point. I remember asking Doris if there was any paperwork I needed to fill out so she'd have my name on file for the screen credits. Her answer was the credits were already done and she wasn't about to spend another \$50 to change the card.

As soon as the day ended, we packed up the car as fast as we could. I remember Tony leaving us in the car as he headed back upstairs for close to half an hour. Everyone wondered what he was doing. We waited impatiently then got the hell out of Queens. I didn't care if I ever saw this mad woman again. The wonderful, wacky world of Doris Wishman. What a memorable experience.

Cut to: February 1998. The NuArt Theatre in West L.A. was playing a Doris Wishman Film Festival. It had been almost 18 years since I'd had any connection with this woman, so I decided to go and see several of her films on the big screen. And there was Doris in the lobby, signing autographs and meeting people, wearing dark sunglasses the entire time and an old green coat. After the film, Doris approached the mic still wearing her sunglasses and green coat and did a Q&A with the audience. When someone asked if she had plans of making another picture, she said she had two wonderful scripts just waiting for backing and both would cost around \$50,000 to make. Poor Doris! She was living in another era of moviemaking. One she would title *The Dildo Killers*. The audience howled with laughter. How could anyone not find this person charming, unless they worked for her? Afterward, she returned to the lobby to sign photos. At one point a fan stood beside her and asked if his friend could snap a picture. Without waiting for an answer, the camera's flash went off and Doris screamed: "No pictures or I'll sue you! I'll sue you!" I managed to slip her a note with my number, and to my surprise she phoned the next day.

We met the next day during her weeklong film festival and had lunch at a Chinese restaurant up the street from the theatre. She said she remembered having me on the set back in New York. Of course, I wanted to know what ever became of *A Night to Remember* since I hadn't heard a hair about the film, and she began to tell the sad story. As it turned out, she sent the footage to the lab. At the time, the labs in New York were

closing as all the business was moving to Los Angeles. The employees were bitter knowing they'd be out of work, she explained, and someone in the lab didn't especially like her so the negative was mysteriously destroyed. (Note: I had heard from other sources there was an existing copy of the film, but I didn't mention this, as it was hearsay.) She told me about a Japanese investor who gave her money to complete the film and how she had to call him to tell him what happened. It was a sad and depressing story. She then asked if I knew anyone who'd like to invest in her next project and if I could put the word out. I remember her telling me about feet, how she pictured a scene in which you'd see a pair of shoes running across the screen as a cut-away. Having seen some of her previous films, from *Blaze Starr Goes Nudist* to *Bad Girls Go to Hell*, I knew what she was talking about. For some odd reason, she would put on shoes and you'd see her feet move across the floor for no reason. I guess it was a Doris Wishman trademark of sorts. I walked her back to the motel and sat in her room for a bit and chatted. I had a great time spending time with her. Could this be the same Doris Wishman who had been so difficult to work with so many years ago? Of course it was. She was just out of context.

Many months later I received a letter from Doris, saying it's a shame we live so far apart and how great it would be if we could work together. She went on and on, saying if I helped her get financing I could work as her producer, but for obvious reasons she'd have to be the one directing. Several years later, I heard one of the independent networks did an episode on her and shot her directing a scene, as if they were on her set doing a behind the scenes. Doris had once again returned to the limelight. All of this hype led to one last project. In June of 2002, Doris returned to making movies with a script titled *Each Time I Kill*. The crew was made up of University of Miami film students and a couple of Wishman fans from around the country, along with her legendary cinematographer and my ol' buddy, C. Davis Smith. Fisher from the B-52's did a cameo along with Linnea Quigley. Who knows what will become of the film now that Doris is gone.

Doris Wishman died on August 10, 2002 at the age of "39" after a brief illness with lymphoma. Her long career spanned over 30 years and her self-taught style of filmmaking set her apart from her peers. She was definitely the undisputed queen of sexploitation films. I'm honored I had the chance to work with her.----

# BIG FOOT

## By VERNE LANGDON

"YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A BIGFOOT." But John Chambers had nothing to do with the Patterson version!

In my mailbox recently: "I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Bigfoot. Papa says, 'If you see it on the Internet, it's so.' Please tell me the truth, is there a Bigfoot, and did John Chambers make a suit for him?" - Virginia

Yes, Virginia, there is a Bigfoot. Several, in fact. I've even seen one or two let me tell you...

Not long ago some fellow-expeditionaries and I made our way through the dense fir forest of Humboldt County, seeking to determine, once and for all, if Bigfoot did or did not reside around there, as purported by some, believed by many, and skept by several skeptics.

The sun was high in the sky - it was blistering hot, we were tired from hiking for what seemed like days, and I was very thirsty.

Separating from the others just long enough to find the location of a distant brook I heard babbling off in the distance, I discovered the naturally-coursing fluid, approached, knelt down, noisily splashing my cupped hands into the wet, crystal-clear elixir, and quenched my parched throat.

As I drank copious quantities of the marvelous spring water, I heard something large, very close behind me, panting noisily in the thick and mysterious woods, snapping branches and breaking tree trunks. I whirled around, toppling over and almost tumbling into the stream.

What I saw made my blood run cold!! Instantly My own perspiration drenched me from head to toe!

Bellowing an enormous "ARRRRROGGGHHHHH", a huge, hairy, stenchy GIGANTIC MONSTROUS BEAST breathed his vile and putrid animal breath down upon me.

"I'm Bigfoot, and that's MY water you're drinking!"

I was stunned, shocked and horrified, but managed to query of my quarry "Well, I don't think you're who you say you are. I don't think you're a 'Bigfoot' at all! I think you're just some good wearing a Bigfoot costume Makeup Master John Chambers just whipped up one day when he was out of work and looking to pick up a few paltry bucks to buy some baloney for his sandwiches."

Yes, John Chambers loved baloney sandwiches, but I doubt he much loved the baloney that's been flung around the past few years by people who should know better.

If you're not up on your Bigfoot rumors, for quite some time now a few old maids have been chattering that the "Patterson Bigfoot" - a critter with big feet who lived in the woods and was caught on film back on October 10 (close to Halloween!) 1967 by a gentleman named Roger Patterson, a "Bigfoot hunter/writer" along with a friend, one Robert Gantlin - was the creation of the Oscar-winning monkey maestro.

Not long ago I came across an intriguing website offered by a dedicated fellow - one Mark Chorvinsky - which featured a list of assorted rumors suggesting that the costume of the mysterious ("Patterson Bigfoot") missing link was a Chambers creation.

I emailed Mark Chorvinsky (strange1@strangemag.com), reporting that a recent airing of INSIDE EDITION (11/3/03) revealed a Michael Wallace of Humboldt County told that his late Father, Ray Wallace, made what I assumed (silly ME!) to be the "Patterson Bigfoot film", which unnamed sources have credited to John Chambers (silly THEM!) According to his son, Wallace made a costume, his wife Elna wore it, and Mike's Brother Rick showed the wooden "feet" his late Father fabricated to create the huge tracks!

Mr Chorvinsky, obviously a veteran of this conversation with many others previous to me, responded that "The Patterson suit was not worn by Elna nor was it owned by Ray Wallace. Elna has denied wearing the Patterson suit and Michael has never said that his father had anything to do with the Patterson film. I should know since I broke the

Wallace story back in 1993." To which I can only enthuse, Whatever.

Nonetheless, the ball being back in MY court, I thanked Mark for his reply, saying I must be unfamiliar with the "Patterson" film clip, because the only (color) film clip of any "Bigfoot" I've ever seen was the film clip featured on Inside Edition, as reportedly created by Ray Wallace, which evidently has been confused (at least by me!) with "The Patterson film." (I completely overlooked a short B&W bit of footage, quite similar to the color stuff, I saw someplace over the years depicted in one or two still photos. "Patterson"? Schmatteerson. I don't know.)

What I do know is that John Chambers was a longtime friend and business associate of mine, and I worked and socialized closely with him from 1963 through all the Planet films and TV series, and other projects (relating to makeup and otherwise), over the years, staying in touch with him until his passing August 25, 2001. I was "there" long before most of the named and unnamed sources who claim to be "in on the secret."

As I wrote to Mark Chorvinsky, you can imagine that in the five years I was Don Post's partner, we heard just enough of every pitch from everybody in show business, or wanting to BE in show business. The "monster/creature/oddlities/rubber & plastics business" taught me one thing: NOBODY ever wants to spend any money, be they prince or pauper.

In entertainment biz (as in other biz) it's the game to cry poor, citing thin pocketbook, high rent, low budget, unforeseen expenses, and "I got a brother or a friend in the business who'll make it cheaper for me than YOU will!" Yeah, right. We always laughed them off, and most of the time wound up doing their projects anyway, for our quoted price (they got their money's worth, our standard of high quality, in return.)

As far as John Chambers doing quickie jobs for Patterson or anyone else outside the TELEVISION or MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRIES, artists of top quality (John Chambers was the ultimate for his time) didn't come cheap. Like others including The Westmores, Gas Norin, Ben Nye Sr. and the Tuttle Brothers, all were as busy as they wanted to be, for extremely good money, none needed to pick up a few bucks moonlighting animal costumes for out-of-town impresarios. Add to this the UNCLE requirement that a makeup artist or hairstylist must work a certain number of hours for a participating signatory within consecutive specified time periods over their years prior to reining in order to qualify for I.A.T.S.E. Health & Welfare benefits, and you have still more good reason why John Chambers or any of his Film Industry contemporaries had very little leisure time for extra-curricular monkey business or any other kind of business!

Not many outside the Film Industry could afford or would pay such wages, and one glance at the Patterson suit OR the Wallace suit tells you one thing: they look like what they are! animal costumes, and poorly made ones at that.

Two people who did afford John Chambers' deservedly-lusty fees were Frank Hansen and Jerry Malone, two entirely different and separate, unrelated, entrepreneurs, both sucklers for realism. I know for a fact these two "attractions" were the only "Bigfoot fabrications" John Chambers ever worked on.

I remember Frank Hansen, who represented

CULT MOVIES

himself as having served in the United States Air Force, making an appointment with us and coming out to Don Post Studios, where I was Don Post's partner at the time. Hansen told us what he wanted, and as I recall, he both verbally and physically described it, showing us a very crude drawing he said he had sketched of "it." It had to look real!

He wanted it fabricated in a material that could be frozen in a solid block of ice, and at that point we called John in on it. Don had introduced me to John in 1963, and John was impressed with the direction I was taking with Don Post Studios. Gradually he became part of certain projects.

So John, Don Post, Universal Studios makeup artist Werner Kepler, a friend of John's working under Bud Westmore at Universal, and I consulted on Frank Hansen's "creature." At the time we were all very busy, and John shared our reluctance to get involved, so we recommended sculptor Howard Ball, known for his creation of the prehistoric mammoths for the La Brea Tar Pits.

We also recommended a bright young man we knew in the plastics/vinyl field, Sam Goldberg, as we all felt vinyl would be the material that would best withstand the freezing process. Once Mr. Ball had sculpted the figure, I believe Sam Goldberg put Frank Hansen in touch with someone to make the metal mold and produce a figure from the mold. Then Frank Hansen brought his new vinyl "creature" back to us, and we (John, Don, Werner and myself) discussed painting and hair.

I recall Werner took over the project at this point, and either ventilated or arranged for ventilating the creature's hair, possibly Ziggy (Siegfried Geiske) or Josephine Turner. We didn't see the completed creature again until the Argosy article (Argosy Magazine/ May/1969) came out. (I still have a copy of that article!)

Mark wrote to me that Frank Hansen mentioned John Chambers in the Argosy article, but I think not by name. Frank Hansen certainly didn't mention Don Post Studios or Verne Lundgren by name in that Argosy article, yet to the best of my knowledge, we were the very first people Frank Hansen approached with his "idea."

Not long after the Argosy article came out on Frank Hansen's "creature", Hansen called and asked me to have dinner with him. I took him to the Magic Castle, and as we sat there dining Frank "confessed" to me a new version of his "ice man" story (various accounts I've read since indicate he's revised, drastically-altered and polished it even more. I've never liked revisionists.)

Seems as how there really was a "Neanderthal" from prehistoric times, encased in a huge frozen piece of ice (the tip of the iceberg, as it were), which Frank Hansen had persuaded "the Chinese" to give or sell to him.

The story went on and on (it took the full dinner course for him to tell me: Frank Hansen was quite a talker!) ending with him not being able to get his "thing" into or out of the U.S. (because it's illegal to cross borders with a human corpse or something to that effect, he told me, so he had to put his rare & home-to-goodness (the "real") creature in storage (COLD storage, I can only assume), therefore requiring us to make a duplicate ("fake") to be used on all the personal appearances he had booked on carnival midway.

Thus is why he came to us in the first place, he seemed intent on convincing me, although it had

never occurred to me to ask him to convince me of anything.

Frank Hansen said he'd read all about Don Post Studios (I suspect in James Warren's & Fory Ackerman's Famous Monsters of Filmland Magazine who knows!) Lots of magazines, newspapers and television shows did stories on Post Studios.)

I remember finding it difficult to keep a straight face as he spun his windy yarn, and I vividly recall laughing loudly at him when he finished - thus conveniently coincided with the conclusion of our meal - and I proclaimed, very matter-of-factly "Frank, you're full of sh@t!"

I picked up (and paid!) the check, we said goodnight, and went our separate ways. That was the last time I ever saw Frank Hansen, who probably still lives in Minnesota, with or without his frozen decay vinyl figure (or is his vinyl figure now in storage while the REAL ice man corpse reposes in his barn? It should matter!)

Mark Chornvinsky shared with me his unassociated, nonetheless on-target, assessment of Frank Hansen as "an idiot", an opinion I most assuredly share, though I feel compelled to add, albeit a shy idiot.

Soon, innovative carnival entrepreneur Jerry Malone, the "Father" of "Little Irvy", saw the Argosy article, and decided HE should have a "Bigfoot" for his carnival circuit TOO, and we were off on that tangent again.

I already knew Jerry Malone from "Little Irvy" through a mutual friend, Larry "I'll make this short 'n' everything" Rupert.

We hooked Jerry up with John Chambers, so John wound up doing the Malone "Bigfoot." But in order to get to "Bigfoot", you gotta go through "Little Irvy."

Jerry Malone was originally a pre-owned motor vehicle salesman who flew over the cuckoo's nest known as "the used car business", entering the business of show via refrigeration!

Jerry was traveling the coast one day when he stopped at a little roadside museum by the ocean which exhibited sea life. Business was good, as tourists packed the small building to see a baby shark swimming in a little aquarium. He got the idea to tour a shark throughout the East and mid-West, where people had never seen a LIVE (or once-live) shark. The idea grew until Jerry's shark became a WHALE, and before you could say "Barnum!", Jerry was hunting investors!

After a string of frequent meetings with potential "investors", Jerry finally borrowed some of the seed money from his own Uncle "Irvy", and Jerry's car lot boss, George Zaranian, put up the rest for really high stakes. When his Uncle Irvy asked Jerry, "What will I get out of this?" Jerry vowed, "I'll name the whale after you!" And he did.

Carnival historians document popular whale displays in the 20's and 30's, but this was before sophisticated refrigeration! Jerry Malone went through fire & brimstone, refrigeration companies, custom truck manufacturers, attorneys, preservationists, dockworkers, the State of California and even Washington, D.C. to get his WHALE, freeze it from the inside-out and the outside-in, then put it on the road! Jerry toured "Little Irvy", quite frozen solid in a huge custom

truck (this track led to a whole other touring enterprise, "Big Boss Truck", another great story in itself), for close to thirty years, becoming famous in the Carnival industry and making money almost faster than the U.S. Mint could print it!!

By the time he got around to adding the Chambers-made bigfoot, he had already become incredibly wealthy from the carnies circuit.

(A side story, by the time Jerry got bigfoot into his custom trailer and ready for the road, I was working with Doena & Stan Freberg, creating radio and TV commercials, so I produced a "Bally tape" complete with original page organ score for Jerry's "Bigfoot" and "Big Boss Truck" attractions, hopped a jet, and handed it over in person to Jerry when he premiered these exhibits at the Iowa State Fair in Cedar Rapids!)

I was saddened to learn Jerry was killed in a car crash several years ago, but not before he retired from the carnival business and amassed yet another fortune in voluminous tire sales as "Tyrone Malone".

Jerry's "Bigfoot" was just another example of John Chambers' perfectionism, creating it himself, as he did, aided by Werner Kepler (they made a full head and body cast of giant actor Richard Kiel for the model). But this masterpiece was SO perfect, everyone who saw it just knew it couldn't be real!

These two "Bigfoot" creations notwithstanding, believe me when I tell you John Chambers didn't take on any other carry grand show "Bigfoots", or hairy "suits".

Why not? What else was John Chambers doing around this time?

John became increasingly in demand, starting late in 1962 when he created incredible foam faces for an NBC-TV "Dick Tracy" pilot, then doing custom masks of Mad Magazine's Alfred E. Newman, worn by Fred Astaire for a TV special (John later let Don Post pull a master from the mold to use for making "What me worry?" masks for commercial sales), cleverly devising "double" masks of Charlie McCarthy & Mortimer Snerd for little people to wear for an Edgar Bergen guest stint on Jack Benny's TV comedy show, taking life masks of Tony Curtis, Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster, Robert Mitchum and Frank Sinatra then forming their appliances for "The Last of Adrian Messenger" (1963), creating a full Canadian movie "wax" (actually RUBBER) museum for entrepreneur Mack Howe in partnership with us, designing then producing countless special cosmetic appliances for cancer and accident patients.

Then came all those what-seemed endless makeup screen tests before Arthur P. Jacobs and Fox would commit to doing "Planet" (only after John Chambers proved to Jacobs and the studio that the makeup "worked" would they film the novel, which had previously been optioned then dropped by every major studio in Hollywood!) Don't forget his doing special Outer Limits makeup, designing and formulating Dr. Spock's scars, making a remarkable bust of Jackie Bunny for Benny's TV show, doing an awesome life bust of Herb Vigran for a TV commercial, ad innum.

John was also experimenting with a technique he had developed for taking life masks of actors with their EYES OPEN, doing top quality work for

filmy makeup artists, and developing and hand-spraying the FINEST bald caps EVER used in Hollywood. Top Secret in those days was the fact John was also adding the CIA, which required a great deal of travel, about which very little was said, but a great deal was accomplished.

For all the years I knew John, his Dad Mickey and dear wife Joan, his plate was piled higher than any other makeup artist or lab man in Hollywood, with eye-popping fees, paychecks and bank deposits to match!

Virginia, you can do the math, but any way you add it up, John Chambers was far too busy There was no reason, and certainly no extra time, to throw together (for little or NO money?) a quite mediocre monkey costume with an indistinguishable/undefinable "face" for probable prankster Patterson. Any makeup artist (or fan or collector or shoe salesman) who ever really knew anything about John Francis Chambers would be able to tell you this.

Mark Chorvinsky wrote to me "I try to make it clear in my Chambers articles that I do not personally believe that Chambers made the Patterson suit. There is no strong evidence that Chambers made the suit. Someone made it though, and I would like to know who it was. I never felt that the Patterson suit had the look of Chambers' work."

And Mark Chorvinsky is right. The suit does not have the look of John Chambers' work, because John Chambers didn't have anything to do with the "Patterson Bigfoot".

Reportedly, the "Patterson Bigfoot" sequence was shot in 1967, when Patterson and Grimbak, who lived near Yakima, Washington State, traveled to Northern California (maybe near Humboldt County???) to "track" bigfoot (wouldn't you just think California would harbor a "Bigfoot"? Why not Philadelphia, Connecticut, Oregon, Tennessee, Florida, or Hawaii? Must be our glorious climate...)

Wallace's sons have admitted their Dad (not a professional makeup artist or costumer) made the Humboldt County suit. No major accomplishment. It wouldn't have taken a John Chambers or a Dick Smith or a Ben Nye or a Bud Westmore - all professional MAKEUP experts involved in the application of FACIAL craftsmanship - to whip up a monkey costume.

No, this would be more the work of a costumer, but NOT a STUDIO costumer. The kind of hometown costume shop one might find near Yakima, Washington State, or around the Humboldt County, yes. But certainly not Hollywood's studio artists.

So if John Chambers didn't make the "Patterson Bigfoot" costume, who did?

Probably Messrs. Patterson and Grimbak, or a local costumer, wife, niece, nephew, or the guy next door. But you can bet the ranch John Chambers didn't make the "Patterson Bigfoot" skin, nor did John's associate for many years, Tom Burman, "wear it", as another "source" asserted. How do I know this? Elementary, my Dear Virginia. Tom Burman told me he did not wear such a costume and Tom Burman is to be believed.

Somebody reported seeing some hair suits in the closet in John's little lab in back of his then-home at 330 South Myers Street in Burbank, insinuating

one or more of these were later cut up and used for the "Patterson Bigfoot".



Well, one of these suits was from the Outer Limits TV show, and the other suits belonged to diminutive monkey/ape actor Janos Prohaska. John made the chimp and other ape faces for Janos, and bought the Prohaska suits for sentimental reasons from Prohaska's widow after Janos and his son were killed in the devastating 1974 (seven years after the "Patterson Bigfoot" film was supposedly shot) Wopler plane crash that needlessly took so many very precious lives.

Most of my recollections contain annexations.

John designed and created the cave men appliances for this ABC TV-Wopler Productions "Primal Man" Television series, and woke me with a phone call at 5 am one morning, asking if I would replace one of the boys who had returned mid-production from the filming.

I burned him down because I was worn out from a few nights' location work at Forest Lawn, so John gave the call to someone else, and that makeup artist filled the position, flew up, finished the shoot, and later died in the returning Sierra Pacific Airlines Convair 440 plane crash which ended so tragically for all 36 people on board (the worst air disaster in Inyo County history), including Janos Prohaska, his son, Robert, director Dennis Azzarella, and stuntman/wrestler "Gentleman Gene" Dubuque (AKA "Magnificent Maurice").

This happened on March 13, 1974, shortly after takeoff on the return flight from Bishop to Burbank. Had I accepted, I would NOT be writing these words to you now!

Mark Chorvinsky finds it "amazing" that so many makeup artists believe John made the Patterson suit, but as I told Mark, makeup artists (just like all us other insects crawling on the planet's face) are very often like the actors and actresses they make up: just because they're gifted does

NOT necessarily mean they're very bright.

Nor does it mean they listen well (which of us always does?)

Overheard

A. John Chambers had something to do with a couple of bigfoot creators.

B. John Chambers did a Schlock movie.

C. Roger Patterson filmed a schlocky bigfoot.

Ergo: "OH! THAT MUST BE THE BIGFOOT JOHN CHAMBERS MADE!"

(A+B+C = MISINFORMATION!)

This sort of thing happens all the time (ever play "Gossip"?).

One fact above all remains then, that everything old is new again! Just as so many years ago people sought to debunk Hull & Newell's Cardill Giant, P.T. Barnum's copy of the Giant, a Woolly home, and (shades of Malone's Little Irvy - or visa-versa) Whose Whale, we will live another day to see another Bigfoot, then seek to debunk again!

In our time we strive to solve riddles, striking down those terrible men behind the curtains who bring to us in large refrigerated trailers, and other manner of display, strange ice men, Bigfoot creatures, bat children and outer space creatures! How could we think they were other than "real"? And if we do not know for a fact who made such dreadful hoaxes, then let us pick a name, be expert, and pretend to know who surely was responsible.

For MY twenty-five or fifty cents (about what they charged when I haunted carnival midway in my formative years), pinheaded SCHLITZIE - LAST OF THE AZTECS (Vantene & Lee's Sideshow) was a far better entertainment buy. What you saw was what he was, and to top it all off, Schlitzie was ALIVE!!!!

And yet, Virginia, knowing all this, again I emphatically state, YES! There is a Bigfoot! Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Bigfoot! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virgins. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

But just remember, dear little Virginia, whatever you may hear to the contrary John Chambers did NOT make the Patterson Bigfoot suit!!!



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# MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL HAPPINESS

The *Candy Snatchers* is one of those great '70s exploitation cinema landmarks. You know what I'm talking about here, it's the type of film which was made quick and dirty with a budget of several grand in good of 1973, starring a largely no-name cast and directed by some equally obscure guy who never — to anyone's knowledge — helmed another film. It most probably played for a few weeks on double bills at drive-ins and grindhouses across the country, bowing out all those lucky folks who caught it during its original flash-in-the-pan theatrical run (fortuitously, the film is currently available through several mail order video companies). Then, as quickly as it appeared, the film suddenly vanishes into thin air, kept alive by word of mouth which makes the kind of hype-exaggerated boasts that in turn elevates the film to near-mythical status in the underground Grade B trash movie community as a bona fide "don't miss it" trash pic.

Now, none of this purely speculative hogwash would be worth reporting if it wasn't for this one genuinely startling, ineluctable fact: *The Candy Snatchers* more than lives up to its killer cult reputation by doing what all the best, most fondly-remembered and well-regarded films of my type ought to do. Namely, the film not only meets the viewer's expectations, but also surpasses and confounds them by transcending the level of just merely "delivering the goods." Sure, all the necessary junk ingredients — profane dialogue, graphic violence, sex, nudity, shoot-outs, car chases, basically every last base and unphotographed element any devotee, dyed-in-the-

wool shock movie fiend could possibly desire in a respectable junk pic — are present and accounted for in ample abundance. But that's not what allows *The Candy Snatchers* to stand tall on the trash movie heap. Nope, what really makes *The Candy Snatchers* a sardonic sleaze cinema gem is how the film becomes increasingly nasty and berserk as the whole sordid story unfolds, keeping the viewer off guard with a handful of imaginative plot twists and hilarious moments of cutting, pitch-black humor. In short, *The Candy Snatchers* delivers the goods and then some — something which only a chosen few precious movies ever successfully accomplish.

The plot itself is deceptively threadbare, a nothin'-to-get-all-excited-about premise that's been done to death and ostensibly offers very little in the way of genuine surprises. To wit: a trio of desperate, disreputable criminals: about a rich guy's lovely, noble 16-year-old daughter (the oh-so-innocent and delectable Candy of the film's title), whom they will set free in exchange for a fortune in expensive diamonds. So far, so standard. And the first glimpse of the kidnappers makes the viewer fear for the worst. They're all wearing hokey Groucho Marx glasses — those silly specs with the large rubber noses and thick black plastic rims. The threesome's van isn't any better, what with a stupid bumper sticker that reads "Money is the root of all happiness" (Doooh, the irony!) Most wretched

of all is the lame-ass soft-rock theme song, an inept pop ditty called — somebody give me a bucket, I think I'm gonna hurl! — "Money is the Root of All Happiness." It comes across as a pitifully obvious and contrived stab at ironic commentary. Luckily, one's initially dim take on the film gets immediately shaken once the kidnappers begin to strut their splendidly stinky stuff.

These scoundrels are a marvelously mangy and colorful bunch. For starters, the head kidnapper is a brassy young woman named Jessie — a truly cunning, cold-blooded, ruthless bitch (Horde and beautiful, with a devilishly creative mind and no scruples, this gorilla girl ain't the kind of chick any sane man would want to mess with. She's a first-class bull-buster and pure bad news, no shit. Eddy, a plump, middle-aged Italian guy, is the most humane and sensible of the three. He comes across like the type of pathetic, ludicrous, blandly-fuck-up schmuck who can't ever get life to work for instead of against him (among other things, Eddy was an army officer and briefly held a job at a furniture store, meaning that the guy is essentially one of life's habitual losers). As a

and surprising. You see, the cute little blond kid becomes the film's sort of almost hero, making game, but futile attempts at convincing his loud, overbearing, shrewish, mega-bitchy mother depressive mother (she uses a cowbell whenever she calls her son by name to come home), his ineffectual working stiff father, and subsequently all other adults that something's up on the hill nearby where he lives. No doubt about it, the inclusion of the speechless blond tyke as the person who might very well save the day is a bold and strikingly novel concept. And he's just the first of the movie's several masterful surprises.

Candy's wealthy diamond store manager father Avery Phillips constitutes as another, decidedly most unpleasant surprise. He's a completely uncooperative, money-grubbing greedy asshole prick who married Candy's weak alcoholic mother strictly for her money. Avery, a rotten bastard to the striking core, deems Candy expendable, opting instead to use this opportunity to make off with the diamonds so he and his gorgeous young business partner mistress can run off to Rio. Complications, as one might expect, ensue, with the kidnappers resorting to some extremely nasty measures to prove that they aren't fucking around. The trio make Candy scream into a tape recorder about the threesome hacking one of her ears off. However, the kidnappers don't cut off one of Candy's ears; they go to a black market human organ ring and purchase a fresh severed ear from an extortionist morgue attendant (he makes the trio cough up \$50 bucks for the ear!). They press it off as one of Candy's own ears. This deliciously demented sequence is one of the film's single most uproariously

unhinged and inspired black comic highlights and further proof that the movie isn't afraid to take off on some extremely nutty tangents which lift the entire movie well out of the rut of your ordinary run-of-the-mill low-budget crime thriller.

When the kidnappers present the ear to Candy's father, the house remains unmoved, explaining in no uncertain terms that he doesn't give a damn if Candy either lives or dies. Things go from bad to worse from here on. The kidnappers decide to kill Candy, so Alan, seizing his golden opportunity to score a prime piece of fresh, heretofore unsold teenage pussy, rapes Candy. (When Alan's understandably disgusted partners mislaid him after he's committed the dirty deed of popping Candy's cherry, Eddy kicks Alan's abhorrent nose up and Jessie calls him "a pig," to which Alan remarks, "What are you so uptight about? You wanted her to die a virgin!") Eddy stops Alan from killing Candy. Eddy says he wants to do it, but instead tries to bluff the whole thing by burying the still alive Candy in "the Hole." The kidnappers buy themselves a shotgun and decide to actually steal those fucking diamonds from Candy's dad. The shit really lets the fan and splatters all over the place. The two murder Candy's boozehound mom (Alan carves her up with his knife after, in a sickeningly nauseous gesture, he seduces and fucks her), Candy's father blows away both Jessie and Alan (who's revealed to



result, Eddy is the token genuinely likable kidnapper. Alan, though, is a completely different story. Young and intense, he's a dangerously volatile and unbridled switchblade-wielding nudge whose wild, unpredictable behavior makes him a deadly threat to everyone he comes in contact with. From his first line of dialogue — "Do I get to ball her?" — Alan asks Jessie when he initially sees Candy walking down the street — the audience knows that this utterly revolting scoundrel will do something unspeakably horrible to poor Candy the moment he gets some time alone with her. Yep, these three shadeguards are the lowest of the low, a gramy galaxy of vicious low-lives and a good sign that the viewer is in for one brutal, twisted ride.

After snatching Candy from off a street corner, the kidnappers take her to a remote hillside area and bury Candy in a makeshift semi-coffin which Candy refers to as "the Hole" for safe keeping (Candy is placed in the ground, wooden boards are put on top of her, the coffin is covered with sand, and the sole source of air is a rusty lead pipe protruding forth from the ground!). Then the three corrupt Candy's father with their demands. But the kidnappers fail to notice that Sam, an apologetically adorable little mute boy with tousled light blonde hair, has seen them burying Candy in the ground. This is where the movie tips up the viewer's initial expectations, turning a thus-far average film into something more wickedly clever

## A 30TH ANNIVERSARY RETROSPECTIVE

by Joe Wawrzyniak

(CULT MOVIES)



GENERAL FILM CORPORATION Presents

# The Candy Snatchers



he Jessica's sicko younger brother right after he sniffs it), Eddy wastes Candy's father - with the shotgun, and, in a shockingly bleak and nihilistic conclusion, the caddy little blond mute boy, packing a pistol, fills Eddy full of lead! The angelic toddlers, clearly fed-up with the gross mistreatment he endlessly endures from his abusive parents (at one point Sean's mom threatens to put the kid in a deep slumber by dopping him up on downers!), caps it all off by shooting his hideous shrieking mother dead! Meanwhile, the madly shrieking Candy is left buried in "the Hole," where she will most probably starve to death, or, if by some remote chance she does survive, will be reduced to the level of a drooling basketcase because of all that time spent in a constricting, claustrophobic underground space. Now, that's what I call a top-notch, jaw-dropping, play-it-safe-film-conventions-be-damned ending!

The uniformly acting from the cast plays a key role in making *The Candy Snatchers* such a divinely demented jewel. Brad David, Vincent Martonano, and especially Tiffany Bolling are perfectly heinous and hateful (Martonano somewhat excepted here) as the titular phlegmbags, a distressfully credible bunch of mean, grasping, and ultimately dumb criminals whose delusions of being smart, capable, professional law-breakers prove to be woefully wrong. Surprisingly, Martonano never appeared in any other movies. But Brad David also acted in *Eat My Dust*, *The Hazing* (a.k.a. *The Company*), and *Heroes*, while the irresistibly comely and bewitching Bolling, who was a model and lounge singer as well as a hugely underrated B-feature actress, kept going at it in a steady succession of choice 70s drive-in fests (e.g., *Wicked, Wicked*, *Bonnie's Kids*, *The Centerfold Girls*, and *Kingdom of the Spiders*), starring the one and only William

Shatner) As Sean, the mute little boy who saves the day, Christophe (no last name is given) is so repellently creepy and huggable that I couldn't help but soar with laughter whenever the toddler's fate was tastelessly put in jeopardy. Obscure Canadian character actor Ben Piazza positively oozes as Candy's dickweed dad, his other films include *A Dangerous Age*, *The Hanging Tree*, *The Bad News Bears*, *Nightwing*, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, *Clean and Sober*, and *Guilty by Suspicion*. Best of all is Susan Sennet as Candy, giving an utterly convincing and very affecting performance as a sweet, delicate, naive innocent - you'll feel like castrating David after he savagely defiles her - who's stuck in a dismal situation that's way beyond her ability to control or understand. Best known as a similar babe-in-the-woods type on the mercifully short-lived sitcom *Ozma's Girls* (a doomed-from-the-start off-shoot of the long-running *Ozma and Harriet*), Sennet's two other exploitation movies of note are *Tidal Wave* and the kick-ass Depression-era action corker *Big Bad Mama*, in which Sennet does a radical departure from her customary young innocent persona as one of Angie Dickinson's flirtatious, bed-leaping daughters.

Fans of saucy surprise cameos should keep their eyes peeled for James Whitworth's memorable bit as the telephone man who David, Martonano, and Bolling beat up for his clothes and van. David and Martonano both get their butts severely whipped by Whitworth, leaving Bolling to reduce Whitworth to a stunned, unconscious stuntp by constantly wacking him upside the head with a large wooden board! Exploitation film aficionados probably know Whitworth best for his turn as Papa Jupiter, the crazed father of the desert-dwelling cannibal family in Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*. With his dark, curly hair, fiery mustache, and strong, stocky build,

Whitworth has occasionally made his intimidating presence felt in a few junk flicks: he's a foul racist biker in *The Black Angels* (thoughtfully retitled *Black Riders* from *Heat* for its video release), a vicious prison guard in *Sweet Sugar*, one of the criminal inhabitants of *Terminal Island*, and the valiant hero of *Planet of the Dinosaurs*.

No-name director Guerdon Trueblood warrants appraisal for his outstanding work, why he never directed another film remains a mystery to this very day (the only other credits I could dig up on Trueblood was penning the script for the psycho-Nazi-vets-bring-the-war-back-home-with-'em pot-boiler *Wildcat Home*, *Soldier Boys* and writing and co-producing the brutally violent Western *The Last Hard Men*). Still, Trueblood's direction here is damn near flawless: tight, focused, fiercely unsentimental, and highly economical (the abduction which gets the whole plot ball rolling transpires while the opening credits are still unspooling!), with no boring lulls or needless expository filler. Everything's spare, squalid, and cut to the bone, with the film's breakneck tempo and tempestuously downbeat, seething tone of all-out heartless amorality never letting up for a minute.

Now, given all these sterling attributes, there's no way in hell that *The Candy Snatchers* can't qualify as the anything less than the stuff of which true trash movie legends are made. As I said early in the piece: Not only does *The Candy Snatchers* completely "deliver the goods" with remarkable proficiency, it also goes that extra mile to break a conventional narrative and bravely break from the mold with its brutally potent mixture of cruelly clever plot twists and morbidly funny humor, a lethal one-two gutpunch which delivers a powerful blow that you'll be reeling from for weeks I kid you not, friends. This one's the genuine gnarly article.



# HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

(Complete Film Score, 1944) Compact Disc

by  
**Gary D. Rhodes**



Of the later Frankenstein films, *House of Frankenstein* certainly tops my list over *Meets the Wolf Man* and *House of Dracula*. And Marco Polo's excellent digital recording of the entire score by Hans Salter and Paul Dessau captures the aural magic of the film on a single music CD.

In keeping with their excellent record, Marco Polo's audio quality here is impeccable. These thirty-five tracks, recorded in 1994 in Moscow, not only feature terrific fidelity, but they're also nicely presented as

separate pieces to allow for easy scanning from one to another as desired. Descriptive titles for each of the thirty-five further help in this regard as the music shifts from the opening "Universal Signature" to such tracks as "The Burgomaster Murdered," "Wolf Man Revived," "Niemann's Revenge," "Death of the Unholy Two," and the "End Cast" credits.

The caliber of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra is extremely high, performing each selection with emotion and fire. In the liner notes, Bill Whitaker mentions the irony of Hans Salter fleeing from Nazi Germany in 1937 and ending up in Hollywood working on compositions for Germanic character names like *Edelmann* and *Frankenstein*. Another irony worth mentioning is that his music would later be re-recorded by the Moscow Symphony in Russia, a country that didn't allow the *Frankenstein* films to be shown upon their original releases.

The accompanying booklet itself features a nice array of photos of the *House* cast, Salter and Dessau, as well as of the CD conductor William T. Stromberg. Though the review copy booklet I have is collated out of proper page chronology, the text by Bill Whitaker on Salter is fascinating. Not only does he mention some brief Salter biographical data, but he

also pinpoints elements of both Beethoven's fifth symphony and Weber's opera overtures that are repeated within the *House* score.

For fans of the film, this disc is an absolute joy. So much care has been put into what not only can be a great set of stand-alone music (my fiancée loved the music playing in the car CD player, but hasn't ever seen the film), but also a score that shows how important music had become in the latter days of the Universal horror cycle. ---

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# BOOK REVIEWS

**The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film** by Susan D. Cowie & Tom Johnson (McFarland & Company, Inc. 2002, 202 pages) *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film* targets three niches in the ever-popular mummy market: monsters in the movies, monsters in print, and the history and science of actual mummification. I have only a layman's grasp of real mummies, and can only comment that "The Mummy in Fact" seems a competent summary. "The Mummy in Film" includes a few movies that have been overlooked, and gives generous coverage to the most famous mummy movies: the Universal series of 1932-1944, the Hammer films of 1959-1971, and Universal's recent big-budget blockbuster hits. The part of the book that deserves most attention is "The Mummy in Fiction."

Unlike some other classic monsters, movie mummies were not spawned by a literary classic. Yet, when Universal made *The Mummy* in 1932, it tapped into a well-developed, long-entrenched mythology. That myth was constructed via countless and largely undistinguished tales of living mummies written in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Several studies have looked at different aspects of the enormous body of obscure mummy literature: Drake Douglas's *Horror*, Peter Haining's *The Mummy - Stories of the Living Corpse*, Bob Brier's *Egyptian Mummies*, John Richard Stephens' *Into The Mummy's Tomb*, Nicholas Daly's wonderfully titled, *The Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity Culture & Fictions of the Mummy*. A key to just how many mummy stories have been written is that all these researchers have unearthed their own set of arcane tales. Likewise for *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film*, Susan Cowie and Tom Johnson have dug up some long forgotten titles. Some notable mummy fiction—Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lot 249*—is given its due, but Cowie & Johnson describe a good many short stories and novels that may be all but lost. They do the same with some very early mummy movies, which are indeed lost.

"The Mummy in Fiction" is mostly plot summaries of various works. That's fine for long-out-of-print stories, but the authors are showing their age when they take the same approach in "The Mummy in Film." Before home video and cable television, movie plot summaries were a necessary reference. Now, with old movies themselves and descriptions of them so accessible, I could have done with less rehashing of the familiar storylines. This is not to say that *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film* lacks critical analysis and behind-the-scenes history, but too often the authors load on the plot minutiae and duck other responsibilities. Telling the reader that Universal's Kharis films "have that indefinable 'something' that make them still watchable" is not very helpful. Nor is their claim that Tony Curtis in *The Mummy Lives* "has none of the...whatever it takes...to play such a role." I have never seen that movie, and don't know what they talking about.

The authors are obviously Hammer film lovers, and this book is strongly recommended for Hammer fans. Alas, I don't share their admiration of Hammer, and I will never rank Christopher Lee's mummy portrayal with Boris Karloff's nor mention Terence Fisher with Karl Freund in discussing great directors. That's an honest difference in preference, but on one point I must take issue with their comments. *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film*'s mean-spirited treatment of Lon Chaney, Jr. is not its finest quality.

Chaney, who adorns the cover of *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film*, played Kharis in three Universal movies (*The Mummy's Tomb*, *The Mummy's Ghost* and *The Mummy's Curse*), made between 1942 and 1944. He complained about the thankless role to which he was contractually bound, and about the grueling experience (head-to-toe in heavy mummy wrappings and make-up during summer shootings). Kharis had no dialogue, no facial expression and almost no body movement other than the famous shuffling walk. From what's on the screen, Chaney apparently did the best he could, but Cowie and Johnson claim he "made the least of the acting opportunities given him, and proved that not only was he no Karloff, but that he couldn't fill Tom Tyler's wrappings either" (Tyler played Kharis in 1940's *The Mummy's Hand*). They admit that Chaney's "lack of charisma...never hurt him less than as Kharis," but

decry his "nonacting style," and finally conclude that "Kharis" in *Abbott & Costello Meet The Mummy* was "no worse than Chaney." I profoundly disagree with those statements, but Cowie & Johnson then go after the man himself. Chaney would not have succeeded, they claim, but for his father (though he long resisted taking his father's name, paid his dues for 10 years before

finding stardom, and few "Juniors" lasted as long in Hollywood as he did). The sad decline of his latter years is summarized once (page 78), and then repeated three pages later (page 81). After a Chaney quote about the torment of playing Kharis, comes the comment "considering the enormously greater discomfort being suffered by those fighting World War II, his complaints probably generated little sympathy." Later in the book Cowie & Johnson quote with admiration a present-day Egyptologist: his laments about his excavation work sound very much like Chaney: too hot, too humid, too cramped, too painful. The authors do not point out that a short distance away in the Middle East, some world-class suffering is going on.

Chaney was an actor of limited range and ability, but so in varying degrees is almost every movie star. The stars are remembered because of that something that Cowie & Johnson are unable to define. The Kharis' films are neither Chaney's nor anyone else's best work. Lawrence Talbot is his masterpiece. In his five performances as The Wolf Man, Chaney created a mythic figure of haunting sorrow; and in that no actor has yet surpassed him.

(*The Mummy in Fact, Fiction & Film* is available from McFarland & Company, Inc. Box 611 Jefferson, North Carolina 28640. Order Line: 1-800-253-2187)

by Frank J. Delio Stritto

## Horror at the Drive-In: Essays in Popular Americana

by Gary D. Rhodes Drive-in movie theaters and the horror films shown at them during the 1950s through the 70s may be somewhat outdated, but they continue to enthrall movie buffs today. More than just fodder for the satirical cannons of Joe Bob Briggs and *Mystery Science Theatre*, they appeal to knowledgeable fans and film scholars who understand their influence on American popular culture.

This book is a collection of eighteen essays by various scholars on the classic drive-in horror experience. Those in Section One emphasize the roles of the drive-in here in America, and its cultural cousin, Australia. Section Two examines horror operated at the drive-in, the rhetoric used in coming attraction trailers, horror film premieres at drive-ins, double features, and especially the marketing of *Lost House on the Left*. Section Three addresses the effects of the Vietnam War and counter-culture. Section Four explores gender issues and sexuality, two of the most common and important subjects of horror film analysis. Other sections investigate a variety of issues, such as the drive-in horror film's embrace of DNA, the use of cinematic form to create a non-Hollywood look in *Wizard of Gore*, and the many different prints and running times of *I Drink Your Blood*.

Gary D. Rhodes, a documentary filmmaker, is a professor in the University of Oklahoma Department of Film and Video Studies. He has authored two previous McFarland books, both relating to Bela Lugosi's place in the scheme of horror cinema. Mr. Rhodes has been a frequent contributor to *Cult Movies*.

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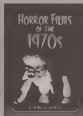
Reviewed by Michael Copner

## Christmas in Canaan by Kenny Rogers and Donald Davenport. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. \$15.99/325, hardback.

Kenny Rogers is an icon in the world of country music. Many of his fans may not have known that he is also a writer and producer of plays as well as musicals and television specials.

Kenny Rogers has teamed up with Donald Davenport to create this touching and honest to life tale of a young black teen and a big burly bully: that seems to have it out for the young black man. Through circumstances created by their families to teach the two boys a lesson about each others lives the two boys learn that family is more than skin deep. A story to warm your heart on a long winter night.

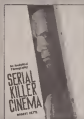
Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga



**Horror Films of the 1970s**  
*The Films of Tobe Hooper*  
 John Kenneth Muir. 672pp., 2002,  
 \$59.95 hardcover (7 x 10), 55 pho-  
 tos, appendices, notes, bibliogra-  
 phy, index, ISBN 0-7864-1249-6.



**The Frankenstein Archive**  
*Essays on the Monster,  
 the Myth, the Movies, and More*  
 Donald F. Glut. 253pp., 2002,  
 \$28.50 softcover, 55 photos,  
 index, ISBN 0-7864-1353-0.

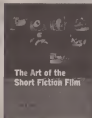


**Serial Killer Cinema**  
*An Analytical Filmography  
 with an Introduction*  
 Robert Cetti. 576pp., 2003, \$65  
 hardcover (7 x 10), 135 photos,  
 filmography, bibliography, index,  
 ISBN 0-7864-1292-5.

# Books on Cult Classics, Feature Films, and More!



**The Dinosaur Filmography**  
 Mark F. Berry. Foreword by Donald  
 Lessem. 509pp., 2002, \$65 hardcover  
 (7 x 10), 190 photos (22 in color),  
 appendices, bibliography, index,  
 ISBN 0-7864-1028-0.



**The Art of the  
 Short Fiction Film**  
 Richard Baskin. 196pp., 2002, \$48  
 softcover (8 1/2 x 11), 960 photos, notes,  
 filmographies, bibliography, indexes,  
 ISBN 0-7864-1183-X.



**Double Feature  
 Creature Attack**  
*A Monster Merger of Two More  
 Volumes of Classic Interviews*  
 Tom Weaver. 728pp., 2003, \$30 soft-  
 cover, 201 photos, filmographies,  
 indexes, ISBN 0-7864-1366-2.



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 Charles F. Mitchell. 303pp., 2002,  
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 appendices, index, ISBN 0-7864-1295-X.



**The Devil on Screen**  
*Feature Films Worldwide,  
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 Charles F. Mitchell. 344pp., 2002,  
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 filmography, appendices, index,  
 ISBN 0-7864-1349-3.



**The Big Screen  
 Comedies of Mel Brooks**  
 Robert Alan Crick. 269pp., 2002,  
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## The Cinema of Tsui Hark by Lisa Morton

One of China's most famous film artists is Tsui Hark, a man little known outside of Asia even though he has directed, produced, written or acted in 64 films over the last twenty years. This book, the first of its kind about Tsui Hark, begins with a biography of the man and a look at his place in Hong Kong and world cinema, his influences, and his thematic obsessions. Each major film of his career is then reviewed, with thematic comparisons made among them. Also provided are production details, comments from Tsui Hark, box office and awards information, and availability of his films. 256 pages, 59 photos, hardbound binding, \$45 from McFarland & Co. Website at: [www.mcfarland.com](http://www.mcfarland.com)

Reviewed by Gino Colbert

## Double Feature Creature Attack: A Monster Merger of Two More Volumes of Classic Interviews. By Tom Weaver

This whopping big McFarland Classic brings together 43 interviews with horror and science fiction movie writers, producers, directors and the men and women who saved the planet from aliens, robots, zombies, and other sinister threats in the movies. The interviewees reminisce about some of their great films and tale amazing stories.

It's a classic volume combining two previous volumes: 1994's *Attack of the Monster Movie Makers* and 1995's *They Fought in the Creature Features*. This combined collection features some of Tom Weaver's best work as a film reporter and interviewer. At 728 pages, with 201 photos, plus filmographies, this book is a true bargain. Tom Weaver is a frequent contributor to our own magazine and many others, and has authored many books on horror genre subjects and personalities.

Check out McFarland's new website:

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Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

## J.P. PATCHES: NORTHWEST ICON

You can talk to people about Zacherle or Vampira and get people interested, as well as find people who know WHO these icons of the Monster Boom generation were. Because to a certain degree, they did have national exposure. But I've found it difficult to get people pay any attention to stories of the horror hosts of my Seattle hometown – and we did have several fairly good ones over the years. How much more difficult is it going to be to get anyone interested in a clown who hosted a kid's show? This book is truly of regional, Pacific Northwest concern, or of interest to those who grew up there.

J.P. Patches was pretty fantastic. He may have started out in the minds of the TV station owners as just someone to host the cartoons, but he grew into something much greater than that. His show aired on the local CBS station KIRO-TV from 1958 to 1981. A program that ran twenty-three years should be considered a phenomenon, even though a local one. And it was a success because Patches entertained the adults, but could relate directly to the kids.

Patches was more or less created by Chris Wedes, who had a background in comedy and radio broadcasting before entering the early era of TV in Minneapolis. Station manager Fred Kaufman brought Chris to Seattle in 1958 to help launch KIRO television. On Feb 10th, 1958, a Monday morning, at 10 o'clock, The J.P. Patches Show went on the air, KIRO's first live broadcast. I'd heard from people who knew him that Chris wished he could have done more "serious comedy", perhaps the kind of thing that Milton Berle or even Soupy Sales was doing in television. Fortunately for his audience (and it was a vast audience) we knew and loved Chris for his charisma as a television clown. Indeed, in this book, most of us see him for the first time without the clown make-up, and he looks in some pictures like a young Raymond Burr.

In those days local broadcasting had powerful impact, and J.P. was powerful as an entertainer, role model, and product pitch man. For a decade or two, if you were opening a new eatery, department store, or putting on a sporting event, you could be assured of a huge turn out by having the KIRO clown doing a personal appearance at your event. Jim Zorn, Seabawks Quarterback from 1976 to 1985 states: "He was already a legend in Seattle when I got there in '76, but it didn't take long for me to get a sense of respect for J.P. because he always seemed to have a smile on his face. On the air, at public appearances, didn't matter, he was always upbeat and played it loose. That looseness, that playing for the moment is what set the show apart from other kid's shows. J.P. was a

kid's best friend."

The general set up was that Patches was the Mayor of the City Dump. And the cameras were looking in on him in his little shack down at the dump. The shows were done live, with reportedly never a script or a rehearsal, but merely a discussion with the director and floor crew about what was planned to go out over the airwaves in a few moments. During the heyday of the show, Patches was on for an hour in the morning, and again for an hour in the evening, when the kids got home from school. There was also a Saturday morning version for a while. Everything went on live, very seldom filmed or taped. Famous guests on the show over the years included Jesse Owen, Burt Ward, Steve Allen and wife Jayne Meadows, Tiny Tim, and even Clayton Moore. Perhaps the most eyebrow raising day was when Colonel Harlan Sanders the Kentucky Fried Chicken magnate, visited the show. The Colonel went off about how badly the local franchises were preparing his secret recipe. Oil camera, the Colonel's PR gurus pulled their hair out.

If you're a grown up Seattle kid who has fond memories of being a "Patches Pal", this book is for you. There are dozens of behind the scenes and on location photos, plus ads showing all the products Patches endorsed over the years. Also plenty of testimonials and fascinating details about how the show was put together, how it evolved over the years, and who was connected to it (Joe Towey, floor director for the show, put on make-up of his own and became "The Count", a fairly popular host of that station's Friday night movie show, "Nightmare Double Feature").

Send a total of \$23.95 (Washington State residents add 8.8% Sales Tax) to: Peanut Butter Publishing, 2207 Fairview Avenue East, Houseboat Number Four, Seattle, WA 98102. It's worth it's weight in gold!

Reviewed by Michael Copner

## Morbid Curiosity: Celebrity Tombstones Across America volume one Photographs and Stories by Elaine McCarthy ISBN 0-9709372-1-0

Celebrities don't always rest in peace. That is the message that shines forth from this fantastic trade paperback filled with stories and photos about show business people who have gone on to their rewards. McCarthy tells about the somewhat eerie mania of a marker for Jackie Gleason with his catchphrase "And away we go" etched onto it. There are much stranger stories.

Elegant Peter Lawford, Rat Packer and one-time brother-in-law to John F. and Bobby Kennedy, was cremated and his ashes placed in a crypt in Westwood Cemetery, just a few yards from friend Marilyn Monroe. But he died broke and his children were told if the \$7000 cost of his funeral weren't paid, they'd be forced to remove his ashes. Lawford's children offered to pay the balance, if his then-wife would relinquish control of the crypt. She refused and eventually the children paid \$430 to disinter Lawford's ashes. The *National Enquirer* paid for a limousine and boat ride to the Pacific Ocean, in exchange for photo and story rights to the scattering of the ashes.

Bob Crane, famous for Hogan's Heroes and videotapes of his sexual exploits, was recently exhumed by his family and reburied in an unmarked grave in Westwood Memorial Park. They were concerned, given the new movie about him, that his previous grave would be desecrated.

Marilyn Monroe was rumored to have been buried with a million dollar diamond necklace. One night two very stupid thieves attempted to break into her crypt at Westwood Memorial Park, ignoring the fact that they would have to break through 500 pounds of concrete to get in. To this day, the marble around Marilyn's crypt is cracked from the unsuccessful attempt. A stone bench, donated by her fan club was also stolen. It has since been replaced by a new one.



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The corpse of John Barrymore, grandfather of Drew, was "rented" for \$200 from the Pierre Brother's Mortuary in Los Angeles, and secretly taken by buddies of his to Errol Flynn's home for a macabre joke. They propped the dead leading man, not yet embalmed, in a chair in Flynn's living room. When Flynn flipped on the light, much to his horror there sat a bloated Barrymore. The sight made him run screaming from his house, only to be told by his "friends" waiting on the porch that it was a gag.

In addition, Barrymore wanted to be cremated and buried in the family plot in Philadelphia, but his sister Ethel ignored his request. Instead, he was entombed in the Calvary Cemetery Mausoleum in East Los Angeles. In 1980, his final wishes were honored by his son, John Barrymore, Jr., who exhumed the body, cremated it, and moved it to Mount Vernon Cemetery in Philadelphia. In order to fulfill his grandfather's final request, he was forced to pawn and sell many of the Barrymore family mementos that were bequeathed to him.

These are but a few of the sad, strange, nearly impossible stories related in this big book of what happens to the stars once they get planted out under the stars. You'll see 150 interesting photos and read the stories of how these people finally wound up. It's fascinating stuff, which will leave you chomping at the bit to read Volume Two.

Also available is the *Morbid Curiosity Calendar* for the very affordable price of \$11.99. This is a mini treasure trove of information. Both the book and calendar are available through [www.celebritytombstones.com](http://www.celebritytombstones.com) or Amazon.com.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

**Stan & Ollie, The Roots of Comedy: The Double Life of Laurel & Hardy**, by Simon Louvish. Thomas Dunne Books, \$27.95, 512 pages, 50 b&w photos, hardback.

Louvish's aim is to look at the life and art of the great clowns of the 1930's afresh, researching from primary sources whenever possible, and approaching their personal lives from the perspective of their relationship to their art, rather than as gossip and scandal. While many books have been written about these two pioneers, a full account of their "double life," and their art from birth to death, has not previously existed.

Laurel and Hardy were at the root of groundbreaking film comedy as much as any team or individual in the history of cinema. They've influenced generations of the finest comedic actors to work in the business. This book is sure to rekindle scores of memories for those who grew up with Laurel and Hardy, or saw so many of their great films on late night TV, as well as introducing a new generation to these all-time greats and their compelling lives.

Reviewed by Michael Copner

**Ron Howard From Mayberry to the Moon and Beyond**

by Beverly Gray. Rutledge Hill Press, \$24.99, Hardcover, 301 pages. Many of us remember Ron Howard as sweet, innocent Opie Taylor from *The Andy Griffith Show*. Baby boomers grew up with him as wholesome Richie Cunningham on *Happy Days* and we cheered for him when he accepted his Academy Award as Best Director for *A Beautiful Mind*. Well, our "lovable baby brother" has grown up right before our eyes.

Ms. Gray has chronicled the life of Ron Howard and takes us deep into Howard's personal life as well as his career. Unable to get Howard's official authorization Gray never-the-less was

able to successfully research and interview dozens of people who are or have been involved through out his life. Starting with his family life Gray has put together his past from those willing to be interviewed plus past television interviews given by Ron Howard himself while growing up.

As Ms. Gray points out, it is fascinating that those closest to Howard are extremely protective and loyal to him and did not make it easy for her to research this modest and quiet genius.

Beverly Gray is be congratulated once again for presenting us with an open and honest look at one of America's greatest directors.

Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

**PINOCCHIO** by Carlo Collodi. Illustrations by Gris Grimly. Ter Books, \$15.95, 222 pages. First published in 1883, Pinocchio has earned its place as one of the most beloved fables of all time. From baby boomers to generation Xers, we can all tell the tale of Pinocchio, the puppet that would be a real boy. In fact, since its publication, Pinocchio has gone on to sell millions of copies worldwide, has been translated into more than ninety languages, and has never been out of print.

Carlo Collodi was the pen name of Carlo Lorenzini. Born in 1826, he worked as a journalist before publishing *The Adventures of Pinocchio* in 1883. So what is new is the fabulous illustrator with his quirky and clever drawings. Gris Grimly has his own contemporary style, with his unique wicked wit that digs deep into one's heart and keeps us wanting more. Having met Gris in person, I can only attest to the fact that he reminds me exactly of one of his creations. He is pure magic.

Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga



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# ALMA RUBENS

BY

## GARY DON RHODES

The name of silent film diva Alma Rubens rings almost no bells to the everyday person at the dawn of the new millennium. Thanks in part to TV documentaries and a revival of interest in *Sunset Boulevard*, Gloria Swanson and Clara Bow seem to be among the only few silent screen femmes who are generally remembered. Rubens just isn't a name that strikes passion in the hearts of moviegoers bred on Star Wars and James Bond and Sylvester Stallone.

To see Alma is a joy. She was a beautiful woman — the face of a flapper, the eyes of a dreamer. A woman of the twenties. But beyond still photographs, it's difficult to enjoy her very much, as few of her films are readily available for home viewing.

Film buffs know Rubens mainly through Kenneth Anger's book *Hollywood Babylon*, in which a few sordid tales of her drug addiction are recounted for the curious. And if anyone's addiction is worthy of discussion, it is Rubens'. Though she experimented with cocaine and heroin and other narcotics, at heart she loved morphine. Once Rubens made it big on the silver screen, the drug dominated her life, far more than it ever would the daily routine later Hollywood addicts like Bela "Dracula" Lugosi.

And Rubens was so young to be so trapped by the drugs that would crush her. She was born in San Francisco in 1897. From her

earliest days, Rubens fantasized of being an actress, even creating the name "Rosa La France" as a hoped-for stage name. At a young age she even approached Sid Grauman, then owner of a San Francisco theater, for work on the stage. Years later her films would play at his well-known Hollywood movie palaces.

After a brief stint in a traveling stage show, Rubens made it to Los Angeles and into the movies. One of her first appearances came in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). Another came in *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (1916) with Douglas Fairbanks. But it was movies like *Humoresque* (1920) that made Alma Rubens a household name for a few years. For example, she starred in a *Rejected Woman* (1924) with Bela Lugosi.

With movie roles came the romantic life of a star, including a one-month-long marriage in 1918 to actor Franklyn Farnum. Another marriage came in 1923 to Dr. Daniel Carson Goodman, a physician turned producer/director. Yet a third was to actor Ricardo Cortez in 1926. But it was morphine over men.

Her life became so dominated with drugs that her film career faltered. She looked at *Show Boat* (1929) as a potential comeback role, but due to entering drug rehab her lines in the part-talkie had to be dubbed. Her own voice was heard in Victor "White Zombie" Halperin and Henry King's *She Goes to War* (1929), but

the film didn't catapult her back into public favor. Nor did ill-fated plans for work on Broadway.

Drugs never lost their hold, and along with everything else her finances crumbled. She wrote an autobiography in 1930, finishing it on December 14 of that year. She then left New York City for Los Angeles. Only a couple of weeks later Rubens was arrested in San Diego on a federal narcotics charge. Drugs were found sewn into the hem of her dress. And yet her autobiography claims she had kicked the habit.

Of course she hadn't. And on January 21, 1931, Alma Rubens died of pneumonia. There would be no comeback, and there would be no freedom from drugs. No freedom except through death.

Obscurity came quickly after her death. Hollywood moves on, and so do moviegoers. Even that untitled autobiography was never published as a book. Only a few newspapers serialized it. Probably it was Rubens' degenerate attempt to raise money.

Now her eyes stare out at us, those few of us who even know her name. It's difficult to know what they mean or meant. What they wanted or what they still ask for.

Buried for seven decades, I found it in tawny, yellowing pages. Musty. Faded. But I couldn't put it down. In fact, I'm editing and annotating the entire work so that it can finally be published as a book. It's happy, it's sad. It's a document of the twenties and the silent screen. It's also a kind of diary of the live fast, die young crowd that burned candles at both ends. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Bix Beiderbecke — us to that crowd that she forever belongs.

What follows are numerous pages from Rubens' book. These excerpts detail her life in the mid-to-late 1920s; the emphasis on drugs and partying over moviemaking probably suggests where her priorities lay at the time. As I said, I couldn't stop reading it once I started. I hope *Cult Movies* readers feel the same way.

I was working on the set, made up for my part. I liked the part, the director was kind to me. I was getting a good salary and I hoped to make a hit and establish myself as a real star of the first magnitude.

I had plenty of dope and knew where I could get plenty more, and as long as I had as I wanted that I was at night. I knew my day of reckoning would come, but I thought I would be ready to meet it somehow.

I will insist this picture, I said to myself, and then I will break the habit. I'll break it if it kills me. I'll go away somewhere with mother for a long rest and I'll fight it out and get the best of it.

I shan't let anything like a little white pellet make a beautiful girl into a haggard, trembling, blue-eyed [sic] wreck and I have known if I make a sudden tramp of a big fine high-minded intelligent man. Not for me, not for Alma Rubens, I'm too intelligent, too young, too wise, and too strong to make a pitiful fool of myself that way.

And just as I was thinking these very things a call boy stepped up to me as I left the set for a minute.

"There's a man here to see you," he said. "He says he's got business with you — important business, and it can't wait."

I didn't know who the man was, and I didn't know what the business was, but something that whispered in my heart like death

himself knocking at my door told me that the business was dope.

"I thought it was some new peddler. 'How did he come to get my name?' I wondered. 'He must know I'm on the stuff. I'll tell him he's wrong. I never took a grain of dope in my life and never intend to take it.'"

But the man was waiting for me. He was a short, fat man with a broad face, and he had a rather pleasant, good-humored manner.

He spoke to me like a kindly man of middle age speaking to a child.

But when he said to me I would not have been understood by any child in the world.

"Your name is on my list," he said. "I am a federal narcotic officer and I know you are on the stuff."

I began to deny it.

"Come, come," said the man, "that bluff doesn't go, not with me. Why, I've talked to your mother about it already."

"My mother?" I gasped.

"Yes, your mother," said the man.

"I've told her I'm a federal narcotic agent, and I am. I've told her I'm a Mason, and your father was a brother Mason and I'm going to do all I can to help his little girl out of this misery she is in."

I could have carried the little, fat, elderly man around and around the lot in a wild dance of joy.

My poor father — he had reached out of the grave to help me, the little girl that he loved so dearly and always tried so hard to protect.

My father, a "Brother Mason." It was all like some wonderful dream, too good to be true and it was too good to be true.

It was a lie from beginning to end, as false as he as was ever told by the ancient father of lies himself.

Yes, he was a federal narcotic agent, that much was true. I don't know to this day whether he was a Mason or not, or whether he really knew my father or not, but this I know, he came to help me and see me and whisper to me, not to help me escape from my slaver, but to drag me further down into the mire. He didn't care how far I went so long as he made money out of my misery and shame.

Big money, ready money, steady money.

I had been paying enough for my dope before he found me.

One hundred and fifty dollars a tube I had been giving to the doctor who was selling me the dope, and that doctor was getting those same tubes for one dollar a tube.

But he was a gentle, kindly, open hearted, generous philanthropist compared to the federal narcotic agent who pretended he had come to save me from myself.

He told the truth about one thing. He had been to see my mother; he told her my name was on his list; he told her the federal officers knew me to be a dope fiend, he said that he wanted to bend me on account of my father.

He told my mother he had erased my name from his list, and from the list at federal headquarters. My mother was terrified.

She couldn't believe her ears, but she began to think and then she remembered that I had not seemed like myself for a long time.

She remembered how irritable and crazy and unreasonable I had become and then how I would suddenly change and laugh and sing, like a creature wild with the joy of living. She told me afterward that she could not bear to believe what the man said about me, but the way her heart sank in her breast, she knew he was telling her the hideous truth.

The man put his hand on her arm and

spoke kindly to her.

"Don't be worried," he said. "It will all come out all right. You can't do a thing for her, not a thing. You don't understand these cases as I do. I know how to deal with them. I've dealt with them by the hundreds, the poor pitiful things. You must not blame them, they can't help it."

"When they're hooked by dope, they've got a disease and they have to be cured by somebody that knows how to cure them, just as if they had smelly-pox or typhoid or pneumonia, or something like that. You leave it to me. I'll get your little girl on her feet again, see if I don't."

And my mother was glad. She thanked him with tears running down her dear tired, worried face. I think she prayed for him every night and morning.

She, too, felt that my dear father had reached out from the grave to save me through this man who knew him when I was a little bit of a girl in my little home in San Francisco.

And then the man began bringing me the dope. I spent over \$300 a week paying him for the dope, and all the time there was a threat in back of the sale that meant "buy this off me or I'll report you and get you arrested as a user."

He used to come out to my house and ask for me and my mother was always glad to see him, she thought it was so kind of him to take such an interest.

One day she looked out into the garden and saw him sitting on a bench by my side and something in the way he looked at me made her turn cold all over.

"What kind of a man is this, anyhow?" she thought. "He tells me a fine story, but somehow he comes so often, and he acts so strangely. Three or four times lately when he was here he made an excuse to go upstairs to the bedroom and right after he had gone Alma hurried upstairs, too. Could it be possible that he is hiding something for her up there?"

The next time when the federal narcotic agent came to see me, my mother slipped down the stairs in her stocking feet and stood behind the portieres of the living room and listened.

"You'll have to give me that \$300 and give it to me today," she heard the federal agent say. "I need it to make a payment on my new car."

"I can't give it to you," I said. "I haven't got it. I'll give it to you next week."

"No," said the federal agent, "you won't give it to me next week, you'll give it to me now. And you'll give it to me quick. I'll tell the world."

"But I gave you \$300 last week to send your mother to Texas on a trip," I said.

"Never mind about Texas or about my mother, I'll take care of that. You hand me over that \$300 and hand it over in real money, thank you, no phony, mind you that."

He held up the three fingers of his right hand and stared me in the eyes.

"Three hundred dollars," he said. "No more and no less, do you get me?"

Before I could answer him there was a sound at my door and when I looked up my mother stood in front of me. She had drawn the portieres aside and come into the room. I'll never forget how she looked that minute. I've dreamed of it a hundred times since. Her face was as white as chalk, she was shaking from head to foot and her big black eyes were blazing like torches.

"What are you saying to my daughter?" she said. "Why should she pay you \$300, you that were her father's friend, you that belong to the same lodge and wanted to help his daughter get out of the misery she is in, what do you want with \$300 or with three dollars or with one dollar that she has worked hard to earn?"

The federal narcotic agent jumped to

his feet.

"Come out, Mrs. Rubens," he said. "Don't get excited about all this. We'll talk it over together, you and I."

"No, we won't talk it over together," said with my poor little girl either. "You walk out of this house and you stay out."

And walk out he did and stay out he did, but he found me at other places and I paid him his blood money just the same and then I went back to the doctor who had been selling me dollar tubes of dope for \$150. If you want to know the name of that doctor and his address, you can find it in the report of the grand jury that investigated him and his dope selling activities about two years ago in Los Angeles. You can find the name of the federal agent there, too. No, the agent was not discharged from the government service, not at all. I don't say that he had something on the high officials above him that made them protect him. I do not say that the federal narcotic commissioner in Washington at that time was a little preoccupied with political affairs, perhaps. But \$300 somehow or other, this agent is still in government service. He has been transferred to Texas. I presume he has relatives there.

The doctor? No, I have never heard that the California Medical Association took the doctor's license away, though of course, they may have done so since then without my knowledge.

He was a very well known doctor with very handsome offices and a large clientele of rich women as his patients. His specialty is obstetrics. I suppose dope is merely a side line. I've often wondered how many of his patients he soothes with morphine.

...

When my mother discovered that I really was a drug addict without any question of a doubt, she started the real light to cure me of my hideous disease, for drug addiction is a disease, and one of the most loathsome, agonizing diseases to which human beings are subject.

This was a light that broke my mother's heart and broke her heart, too, but it never broke her courage or her loyal devotion to me, not for one minute.

When the fashionable Los Angeles doctor was arrested and charged with selling me dope, among dozens of other patients, he said on



the witness stand before the grand jury that he sold dope for me for my mother, as my mother was suffering from cancer.

My mother went on the stand voluntarily and testified that she had never suffered from cancer or from any other painful disease in her life, and that she had not only never seen this doctor, but that she had never even heard of him until she learned to her horror and consternation that I was getting dope from him.

All this was merely skimish in the long, weary, heart-sickening fight which my brave mother began to make for me from the very hour she learned the truth about the dope.

I had become very expert in hiding the traces of the drug habit. My husband, Dr. Goodman, was a very intelligent man and a physician himself, and I had to be most careful not to let him suspect my slaver.

When he did begin to suspect it, he did everything he could to cure me. But it was no use. I couldn't seem to break the chains of dope no matter how hard I tried, and I did try, in deep and desperate earnest, I tried. I went from one cure to another. I tried to tape off on hyosine.

I remember the awful tremors and cold sweats and terrifying nightmares that hyosine gave me.

Sometimes for days I'd think I was beginning to see a little hope and then some strain would come and down I would go again.

After I divorced Dr. Goodman and married Cortez, the screen actor, things went from bad to worse. To give Mr. Cortez justice, he never suspected I was an addict, not for a long time, and when he did begin to suspect it, he did everything he could to help me. But my mother was my chief comfort and aid, and most of the time my only hope.

She never lost heart. She never gave up, though time and again I wished I would go to sleep and never open my eyes to the light of day once more.

I went from doctor to doctor. Some of them helped me for a little while, and some drove me deeper and deeper into the mire. I went from one sanitarium to another. I went to Rosemead Sanitarium. I went to Spadia, the State Institution and I finally went to Patton where they send insane criminals and the innocent insane and a few poor abject slaves of dope.

Dr. Thomas Joyce of Spadia cured me of my addiction. He and his wife seemed to know just exactly what to do with a poor tortured hell-mad victim of dope, to bring hope and peace and sanity into life again—and they did for me.

But there was no room or money at Spadia for the after treatment. And that is as important in the cure of a dope case as the first treatment itself, and I hadn't been out of Spadia for two hours before three different dope peddlers came to me and offered me dope to brace me up for the long fight ahead of me.

My old friend the fashionable obstetric doctor of Los Angeles came to me on the day I left one of these sanitariums and offered me a shot to pep me up. He said it wouldn't hurt me. I took it and was back on the junk again before I had been out for twenty-four hours.

Make no mistake about it, the dope ring never loses a trick.

No patient ever leaves a public institution without the knowledge of every live wire peddler in the game.

The peddlers and their superiors kept what they call a last chance list and on that list is the name of every poor victim who is trying to make any kind of a fight and get off the junk.

The narcotic agents, federal, state, and city, know your name and they know where you

live and how long your term at the sanitarium is and when to expect you out.



And the dope dealers have the same profitable information set down in good big letters in the debt side of their ledgers. Except them if you can.

The federal agent who was blackmailing me into blood money for my dope was kind enough to warn me against another man also in the federal employ.

He told me to look for this man, that he would bleed me to death if I ever gave him a chance.

The man's name was brought into the grand jury investigation which took up the case of the first federal narcotic agent and of the fashionable obstetric specialist.

The second man was discharged from the federal service, but I heard his name the other day as being the head of the vice squad in a large California city.

He certainly knows enough about all the ins and outs of dope selling and dope using to be very useful in some capacity or other with a vice squad.

These sanitariums which are supposed to cure drug addicts are some of them very good and some of them very worse than merely very bad.

Some of these sanitariums, the one at Spadia, for instance, is well run and humanely administered, but Spadia is not big enough to afford shelter for the star cure and the after cure is a very important thing.

In one institution where I was locked up for nine months I remember terrible things.

Things which would chill the blood of the coldest-hearted human being alive.

The nurses at some of these

institutions wear uniforms and caps, and that's all there is about them that belongs to the habit of a real nurse.

They are not nurses at all. They are attendants.

I saw brutality, and cruelty, and outrageous neglect time and time again.

My mother knows the names of the institutions where I saw these things and when I am gone, I am sure she will be glad to give those names and all the particulars as she knows them through me and through other patients at the same institutions, to any responsible people who wish to make a thorough and responsible investigation.

When I walked into a prominent Hollywood hospital I was firmly convinced that I had sufficient will power to overcome the dreadful dope habit, deep as I was in its clutches. I explained my case to the physician in charge and he seemed a most sympathetic person.

Much to my surprise I had hardly become settled when I had hardly become settled in my room when I walked a nurse with a hypodermic needle in her hand.

"What's that for?" I demanded. "I don't want that. I'm trying to break myself of the habit. That's what I came here for."

"Now, don't get excited," she replied, in that coddling tone of voice used in coaxing children. "Just take this like a nice little girl. And you'll soon be all right."

I was furious.

"I won't take it!" I cried. "I won't take it."

"You must," she insisted. "If you don't your heart is liable to collapse. You'll die."

"All right," I said. "Let me die then. But I won't take it."

She became angry.

"Oh," she exclaimed, in carefully modulated tones that bespoke of an iron will. "If that's the way you feel, we'll have to give it to you forcibly."

She called another nurse and although I fought them until I was exhausted, they finally threw me onto the bed and one of them jabbed me in the thigh with the instrument.

When I awakened I was in a sanitarium.

In the private institution they practiced what is known as the "cold turkey" method of dealing with addicts. That is they put a patient to bed and instead of taping off their dope supply gradually, left them to get along the best way they could without it.

This was really what I wanted to do. This was what I had firmly made up my mind to endure when I went to the hospital in Hollywood. However, the effects of the injection had so weakened me and nauseated me that my morale was undermined.

I craved a "shot" in the worst way.

The terrible deprivation pains were overwhelming me. My legs and arms were drawn up in a horrible manner. Their muscles had become knotted and the cramps were driving me insane.

Such was my condition. My heart was palpitating so badly that the moment I would get my cramped limbs straightened out beneath me, I would become dizzy and collapse on the floor.

I rang for an attendant. They paid no attention to me.

This went on for three days and three nights. I suffered all the torments of hell. I died a thousand deaths!

Just when I thought I was surely going to expire, I came my mother. I recognized her

and that was about all.

She insisted on taking me home, and as I was not formally committed, the authorities allowed me to go.

We reached home shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning. We met Ric coming down the stairs.

"Ric. Dear Ric. Please help me," I cried.

Suffering as I was, I believe I had just been the least bit kind at that moment, I would have died before I ever took another narcotic potion.

But he was not in that kind of a mood. He paused, remounted the stairs and slammed his own bedroom door behind him.

If it had not been for my mother, I would have fallen. I had been four days without morphine.

Mother helped me to my own room. I went straight to a little bureau drawer which I had kept locked, opened it, took out a packet of morphine and a hypodermic, fled to the bathroom. Within another minute I had injected a double dosage of the soothing narcotic into my veins. What a relief!

While I was doing this, mother pounded on the door. She begged me not to do it. Instinctively she knew what I was doing.

When I had completed the operation, I calmly walked out, passed my mother into my own room, and went to bed. I slept until late in the afternoon, when once more the dope monster began gnawing at me.

I had had enough suffering for a while. I freed another "shot," got dressed and visited Dr. C. in his office. My morphine was running low.

He professed great surprise at seeing me. As a matter of fact, he was not in the least cordial. When I explained my predicament, that said he would give me one more prescription and that would be the end.

He said that "they" had been looking him up since I went to the hospital and he dare not have any further dealings with me.

When I returned home I was beset with further trouble. Either mother or Ric had trailed me to Dr. C.'s office. Later, I found out they had interrogated him when I left and he swore by all that was holy that he had turned me down flat.

Mother begged me to go to some other sanitarium. I half way promised to do so as soon as I had recovered from the shock of my first experience in such an institution.

The next morning, bright and early, I had a visitor. My mother edited him. He presented a card setting forth that he was a federal narcotic agent. This was Mr. M. He told mother he wanted to speak to me about "Dr. C." I was still asleep, but she called me.

When I got dressed and came downstairs, M. told mother he thought I would be better if he talked to me alone.

M., who said he came from San Bernardino, professed to be deeply interested in Dr. C. He asked me a lot of questions about him, none of which I truthfully answered. As badly as he had treated me, still I shielded him.

It might be fitting here to mention the fact that at no time, throughout the five years I have been using dope, have I ever had any real difficulty in obtaining it—that is, as long as I had the money to pay for it.

Once a person gets the reputation of being a "dope fiend," it is that way. No matter what city or village you may go to, in whatever section of the land, your reputation either travels ahead of you, or else arrives almost simultaneously.

Up until this time the habit had never

interfered with my work. Despite my suffering, physically, because of the craving for dope, and mentally, because of Ric's apparent indifference, I managed to successfully complete Show Boat, the last picture in which I starred.

And, up until the time when the management suddenly decided to inject dialogue into production, I don't believe any of my business associates had the slightest suspicion that I was a confirmed "top head."

The call for my reappearance on the lots to read in the dialogue came as a great surprise. I was feeling fine. I knew that I would have to go to a sanitarium, but I was holding off until my husband asked me to go. I loved him madly now. It may look silly in print, but regardless, I loved him!

My mother knew this. And she got the idea that if she'd return to the ranch at Maders, Ric might deviate from his habit of ignoring me, out of sheer sympathy. She reasoned that he had loved me when he married me, and that his affection might be restored if I were left wholly dependent upon him.

The telephone call for me to return to the lots came on the same day my mother left. I promised to appear in two days, to comply with their request.

And the same day Ric, for the first time in weekend, recognizing me directly, came in and said: "Alma, you've got to go to the hospital! You're going in the morning. You might as well make up your mind to it. Things have gone as far as they can."

Oh, if he had only been a little kind. I wanted to follow his wishes, but his manner ached me beyond measure.

I told him about the dialogue.

"I don't care," was his reply. "You're going. Tomorrow."

I begged. I pleaded with them. I promised to abide by his wishes, if he'd only let me finish my picture.

"Just think of it, Ric," I pleaded. "They've spent a million dollars making Show Boat. Think what will happen if they have to get a double for the dialogue. Everything may be ruined."

"Don't care," was the reply; as he turned around and strode out.

I hastened to the telephone and called my mother. She promised to return at once.

Before she got there the next morning the doorbell rang. Ric answered it. I went to the head of the stairs end who should walk in but Dr. C.!

He and my husband went into the living room and conferred for some time. I went into the bedroom, prepared myself a "shot," and then returned to bed, so nervous, and so frightened, that I was a complete wreck.

My poor picture, in which I had starred. About to be ruined. In the condition I was in, I was consumed in self pity. Since, I have realized that I didn't deserve any. But at that time felt Ric was a brute.

He came up and knocked on my door. I had locked it and didn't answer. He pounded so hard that I thought it would cave in. I got up and opened it.

"Well," he shouted. "Ain't you dressed yet? You're going away. I told you so last night and you ought to be ready. D'you want 'em to take you like this?" He pointed to my nightgown.

"No, no, no, no," I cried. "Please no, Ric. For God's sake, just let me finish my picture and I'll do anything you want. Just let me finish that."

Dr. C., downstairs, hearing the commotion, came running upstairs. I must have been a sight. He helped me onto the bed.

I appealed to Ric to let me finish Show Boat. He was obdurate. He said if I didn't go peacefully he'd drag me out in my nightgown.

Convinced that I was beaten, I beseeched him to let me "go like a lady." I promised to get dressed and accompany them. I wanted to be freed of the dope cure, but I didn't want to be taken as if I were a violent maniac. They agreed.

I went into my bedroom and spurred to time. Every few minutes Ric would come to the door and demand that I hurry. I was playing for time, for what reason I don't know. Nothing could help me, I was sure of that.

Finally, when I knew I could hold them off no longer, I went to my writing desk and took out a long shiny paper cutter, with the idea in mind that, if I couldn't escape, I'd kill myself before we got to a sanitarium.

I threw on a heavy fur coat and hid the dull but pointed paper knife up my sleeve. Then I stood out the door and walked past them both as they stood at the top of the stairs.

They followed me downstairs and I went down the front steps.

Dr. C. was right behind, but Ric stopped in the doorway. Then I knew that he was not coming along; that he was not even going to kiss me goodbye. He didn't care what happened to me.

Instantly, I made up my mind that I would checkmate him. I was burning inside. Forgotten was my thought of committing suicide. I would beat Ric. It was the last thing I ever did.

In the meantime, a white coated inmate, or male nurse, seated in Dr. C.'s automobile, which had been parked some distance down the street, drove up and stopped in front of the door.

I turned and sped like a deer to the corner, almost bumping into a middle aged, shrewd sort of man, walking across the intersection. I apologized quickly and fell into step with him. Dr. C. was right behind.

"Help me," I whispered. "They're trying to kidnap me. Don't let them take me."

He appeared greatly surprised, as no doubt he had reason to be. Quite an unusual request, especially from a girl in broad daylight. I suppose he was too dumfounded to reply.

Anyhow, we kept walking, and, out of the corner of my eye, I could see Dr. C. signaling his companion to catch up with us with the car.

This kept up, I suppose, for a distance of about 150 feet. Then I could hear Dr. C. panting close behind me and the chugging of the automobile, alongside.

Just as he was about to seize me, I threw of my gorgeous fur coat, for which I had paid about \$4,000, and tried to run. But I was too late; Dr. C. had my left wrist in his grasp.

He swung me around, and as he did so I slipped the knife down into my hand, pushed in close and struck him in the tender portion underneath his back suspenders buttons.

"Oh, oh," he screamed, loosening his hold on me. "She's stabbed me. She's stabbed me."

And, as usual, I had to laugh, frightened as I was, and in spite of my unhappy position.

I ran. As fast as my legs would carry me. I reached a gasoline station, where the proprietor knew me.

I was completely out of breath. "Why, Miss Rubens," he exclaimed "What's the matter? What's all the trouble?"

I pointed at Dr. C. and his companion, just driving up. I hurled the knife behind the hedges adjacent to the garage.

"Those men assaulted me!" I gasped. "Biff! Biff! Bang! One, two! One, two!

And as quickly as that, both were cooling their heels in the dust. The garage man, a big husky, had waited for no further explanation, and no sooner had they alighted out of the car than he sent them whirling with well-deserved blows.

Just then a woman drove up a dilapidated Ford. Even with all that excitement, I remember that it bore a Kansas license. She was a typical school marm out on a tour.

I tried to climb in, begging her to hurry away. But I was out of luck. I suppose my disheveled looks were against me. And, while I was arguing with her a crowd was gathering and apparently, Dr. C. and his assistant had explained the situation to all.

They ran over and seized me. I wailed. I knew all was lost. I let them lift me into the car, into the seat between them. Dr. C.'s assistant being the driver. I was forced to sit with my right arm around the doctor.

Once, just as we slowed up for traffic, I saw the opportunity. Stealthily, I turned the handle of the door, and out to the street fell the doctor. I let on that it was an accident, that that I had nothing to do with it.

Then we came to another private sanitarium, where I ran into one of the most horrifying experiences that a girl possibly could survive, and retain her sanity.

While sitting in an ante-room, awaiting my official admittance, I saw one of them carry a dead woman from the cell I was to occupy.

If I tried for a thousand years to phrase my language I would never be able to describe my feelings when I saw that dead woman being carried out. I was terrified. I could picture her as myself!

The moment I had arrived there, I sensed something wrong it was a dismal place. Leading up to the anteroom was a long, dark hallway, furnished in medieval style, with starm wood-cuts and etchings hung on the walls.

I sat down on a long bench. Then I became aware of someone hammering hammering on steel as though they were nailing up bars.

My guess was right. They were. They were nailing up bars on the windows of my room—or cell, would be more descriptive—at the extreme end of the hall.

I got up and wandered down that way, trying to peek in the door, which was ajar. A nurse ran up, all excited.

"You can't go in there," she forbade. "You can't go in there. That's private."

I went back to my seat. A moment later the body was carried out. They didn't tell me it was a body. It was on a stretcher and covered with a sheet, but I saw a woman's bare foot protruding, and I knew it was a dead woman.

They had just passed the corner into an intersecting corridor, when my attention was attracted by my mother's arrival. She had driven all the way from the ranch and had got home too late to see me off and the pitiful circumstances under which I departed.

She did everything to try and comfort me. But it was no use. I was too terrified to talk. I knew I was going to be placed in that cell, but I didn't tell her what I had seen. She broke down and began to cry.

In turn I tried to comfort her. I asked her to let me fight my own battle. I didn't mention my terrible row with Ric. I didn't tell her about the nailing up of the iron bars which I had seen.

By and by she believed that I had consented to undergo treatment, although I impressed upon her the fact that I had not been legally committed. What inner fear, or intuitive sense, led me to do this I do not know, but, happily for me, I did. Otherwise my stay there, in

the end and a futile one, might have been much longer.

Eventually I was booked Dr. C. did not appear again that day until long after my mother had gone. They wouldn't let my mother go into the room with me. She kissed me good-bye in the hall, after promising to write to me every day.

I tried hard to smile when she left, but steel myself as I would I burst into tears. She suspected I was keeping something from her, but I reassured her. She promised to return the next evening and to bring Ric with her.

The nurse came for me. She led me into the room, just as the institution carpenter was driving the last nail in the last bar. It was truly a cell. Dark and dreary. The only furniture was a drab-looking dresser, of imitation oak, a small rocking chair that squeaked, and the bed. There was no mirror.

The bed had not been made. There it was, the coverings torn off and heaped on the floor, the mattress turned half way over on the end, and the pillow, of the shoddiest muslin, perched on top of the upper end of the mattress like a ghostly specter, there to warn me away.

I shuddered. The perspiration came up in little beads on my forehead, and I became violently nauseated. I could imagine that I saw that other woman's body still lying there. Not it was my body!

For hours and hours I paced the floor. Up and down. Up and down, the length of my cell. Occasionally I would try the door, but it was tightly locked.

Once in a while a nurse would come in, a big hoop of keys rattling on her arm, and try to engage me in conversation. I paid no attention to her. She'd sit down in that chair and rock. The squeak almost drove me crazy.

Another woman came in and fixed the bed. She did not change the mattress, although she put on fresh linen—if linen you could call it. In reality it was the same shoddy muslin as covered the pillow. Rough, unbleached.

Through the bars at the one window I could see the automobiles whizzing past on the roadway. I watched them until dark. Not thinking,

not doing anything, but standing there. I was too unnerved to really understand what was going on about me.

They brought supper. I didn't touch a bite. I don't even know what was on the tray. Again the nurse came in and tried to engage me in conversation. I paid no attention.

My mind was far away. My picture, which Ric would not let me finish. My treatment for me. Proof then to me that he no longer loved me. My poor mother unaware of what I had undergone. How long would I be here.

Oh! For a shot!

The deadly deprivation pains began. I had had nothing for almost eleven hours. I doubled over with the cramps and the nurse brought me a drink of water. I hurried it at her, drinking her completely.

She ran out and a moment later in came Dr. C., bowing and scraping, and smiling like a cat which has just swallowed the canary.

He remained but a minute. I begged him for a "shot," but he would not listen. And a few minutes after his left, out went the sole light. I was left, fully dressed, and awake, without a light. I shook the door and a night attendant came. I asked him why I couldn't have one. He said it was against the rules.

I went back to the window and stood there, for hours and hours it seemed, watching the red tail lights of passing automobiles fading in the distance and trying to forget my pains.

Eventually I dropped down on the same mattress on which that other poor woman died,

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and dropped off into a troubled sleep with all my clothes on.

Four days and four nights later it went on like this. I was getting no dope. I was in terrible pain and could eat nothing. I could still see that dead woman in every waking moment and dream about her when I did fall asleep.

And then I broke down completely. I suppose I became temporarily insane. When I came to I was wrapped in oiled, wet blankets, my arms forcibly held so that I could not pull them off. A nurse sat beside me, rocking in that miserable, squeaky chair.

I begged her to release me, but it was not until hours later, when Dr. C. came in, that she did so. She went out, leaving me alone with him.

The moment she closed the door behind her he smirked in a knowing manner. Then he winked, as he pulled from his sleeve a hypodermic needle which he had hidden there.

I ran to him like a young child going to its father who had brought home candy. Hate him I did. But at that particular moment I idolized him. He was my savior. He—and his needle—were my gods!

And all he gave me was possibly \$10 worth of morphine, and the needle, both of which I hid under the inner side of the semi-suburban feet of the chipped, gray-tiled bathtub, adjacent to my room. How carefully I guarded that precious hoard through the intervening days of my incarceration there. I took half portions, weakening the compound as much as I could and get results, so that I could make it last.

My mind cleared up. I changed completely. The regular day nurse, really a most conscientious woman, was overjoyed. She thought I was being cured. And she was happy in that belief.

I was happy, too, because I had my dope!

At the end of three weeks my mother came. And, miracles of miracles, my husband came with her! My mother had called almost daily, but the hospital authorities had forbidden her seeing me, saying it would interfere with my treatments. Finally she demanded my release, and as I was not legally committed, they had to let me go.

Dr. C. had told him I was cured. My mother was in heaven. Even Ric seemed glad. He kissed me for the first time in months.

And then the first thing I did after we reached home, I confronted them both in the living room.

"You think I'm cured, don't you?" I

snarled, turning towards my husband. "You're both fools. I'm still an addict. And now I'm going straight to hell!"

\*\*\*

"I am going straight to hell."

That was my answer to my husband's hopes and to my mother's desperate prayer.

Mother stood there in something almost like a daze. My husband too—for a moment—seemed shocked out of his senses. By a supreme effort Mother pulled herself together.

"Alma Darling," she said, "Alma, my darling baby, don't talk to me like this. Tell me, aren't you cured. Are you still using that dreadful stuff?" I threw back my head and laughed.

"Yes," I said, with a bitter sneer. "Yes, I am still an addict, just a dope fiend, that's all."

I hated myself for saying it, but I had to say it or die, and it gave me a kind of wicked, perverted pleasure to see my poor mother under the stinging whip of my cruel words.

My husband glared at me, utterly disgusted. Then he turned on his heel and left the room. I didn't see him again for days.

My mother held out her arms, and pleaded with me.

"My darling," she said, "don't talk like that. You don't realize what you are saying, you're my baby and you're going to be cured. I am going to take you out of this terrible slavery. It kills me to do it. We'll go away together alone, just you and I, and I will fight it out—together."

I threw back my head and laughed again—I can hear my own voice, my cruel, wicked half crazy voice ringing in my ears right now.

I pushed my mother away, and went up to my room and locked the door.

I looked in the mirror and laughed again. "Mother," I said. "What do I care for her, she'll try to take it away from me, the one thing I love in the world—why I'd commit murder to get a shot just this minute."

By morning I had a terrific temperature, the pain in my hip was intolerable. My mother took me to the hospital and we found that my hip was infected by a morphine needle, which had broken off in my body. They took the needle out, subdued the infection and let me go home again.

Home—I had no home. I wanted no home. I wanted dope, that's all. And I started out to get it.

My old friend, the doctor who charged one-hundred-and-fifty dollars a tube for morphine, which he bought for one dollar, wasn't ready to do business—yet. He held some of my post-dated checks and not one grain of morphine, or heroin, or cocaine, or codeine, or any of the masked drugs, that are nothing but dope, would he give me—not until I made good these checks.

But I found another doctor, a fine dignified, respectable doctor in good standing. He was sorry for me, awfully sorry for me, he said. My case was tragic, and then he started to selling me cocaine. He charged me five dollars for my first three or four "sticks" of cocaine.

A week later he raised the price to ten dollars; a few days after that I had to pay him twenty dollars for the same amount of dope, and in two of three weeks I was paying him fifty dollars for exactly the same dicks of the same dope.

It began to cost me at the very lowest, a hundred dollars a week, and I paid every cent of it to the fine, dignified, respectable doctor, in good and regular standing in the great profession of medicine.

I pawned my jewels—every diamond and every emerald, and every real pearl I had went for dope.

Then I began on my furs. I took a \$2,000 broadtail coat to my friend, the "respectable doctor," and traded it for about a hundred dollars worth of dope.

When that gave out I took my ermine cape and gave it to the doctor for dope. The wrap cost me \$4,000, the doctor said he didn't want it. I think he was getting frightened. I got down on my knees and prayed to him, he grinned and pushed me out of his office.

"No more furs," he said, "what I want is m-o-n-e-y, money."

He licked off the letters with his fingers. "Don't forget Snowbird, bring me money, and we'll talk business."

I went home almost insane with the awful pains that comes [sic] to the poor wretch who's trying to give up dope. In the night I thought of a maid I had. I had discharged her, because she was lazy and afterwards someone told me she was peddling dope.

I snatched up an old address book, and tore through the leaves in frantic haste, yet there it was, there it was in plain English.

I clutched my ermine cape. I know the girl was crazy about it. I'd seen her smooth it when she was hanging it up.

I stumbled throughout the streets looking for the address, when I finally found it, I was staggering from excitement and fatigue.

My hair was on end, my clothes were half on and half off—but I was wearing the cape.



"Snow," I gasped, "get me some snow, all you can get and you shall have this."

The woman caught the wrap out of my hands and vanished into the night. When she came back she had a full two week's supply of cocaine, done up in little white papers.

I sniffed a dose of cocaine and my black world of terror and despair turned to a gay piece of laughter and music, and high hopes.

From that moment the woman who had been my maid, had me for her slave.

I gave her gown after gown, robes of real lace, slips of heavy satin, hand embroidered and edged with magnificent furs, silks, satins, velvets, gorgeous fabrics from the Far East. She had them all, every one of them.

But I had my "snow," and what did I care for clothes or for food or for friends, or for anything but "doka."

I quarreled with my mother and with my husband. I hated them, because they watched me and tried to keep my snow, and my morphine away from me.

I borrowed money from a famous woman star, and rented an apartment of my own. Within a month I was arrested.—

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## SPOTLIGHT ON HOLLYWOOD

by Eric Caidin

Apologies are in order for not having my column in the last issue. Due to the sudden death of my sister and having to make all the necessary arrangements in a hurry, a lot of important assignments were neglected. Thanks to Michael Copner and Coco Kiyonaga for all their help with the funeral arrangements.

There's a lot of ground to cover. We'll get to the Pro Wrestling news first. The first West Coast book signing for Roddy Piper, former WCW and WWF Superstar and featured in John Carpenter's cult classic, *They Live*, took place on Tuesday, Nov. 12 at Hollywood Book and Poster Co. A crowd of over 250 fans stood in line for autographs and Mr. Piper stayed for over 3 hours making sure everyone was able to get an autograph. Recent events include the first book signing appearance of adult actress superstar Christy Canyon, signing her back!

Incredibly Strange Rock N Roll Wrestling returned to Creation Entertainment on Saturday, Feb the 1st at the Pasadena Convention center as part of the Pop Culture and Comicbook Convention. On a sad note, the convention marked the last appearance of B actress Lana Clarkson, star of *Amazon Women on the Moon*, *Sorceress*, *Barbarian Queens*, and other cult classics. Miss Clarkson was a featured special at the GOLDEN APPLE table. The day after the convention, Miss Clarkson was allegedly killed by Phil Spector. Lana Clarkson will be missed by many on the convention and fandom circuit. Highlights of the INCREDIBLY STRANGE WRESTLING show were the frantic hard core sound of FOREIGN OBJECT whose wild stage antics ended up on the wrestling mat with a championship match between the lead singer and a challenger from the audience. The headlining DICKIES put on their usual wild show with the majority of the audience dancing out of control. The wrestling highlights were the tag team of Los Hobos, Backpack Mac and Pan Handle Randall managed by D.T. (Drunk Tank) Murphy who tried their best to interfere in each match and make complete idiots of themselves. Hey, that's what Incredibly Strange Rock N Roll Wrestling is all about. Next show is scheduled for Saturday, May 24 as part of the Fangoria Weekend of Horrors at the Burbank Hilton. Scheduled guests include Bruce Campbell, Angus Scrimm, Brian Yuzna, and many other horror film celebs. Call Creation at 818-499-0960 for further info.

Moving on to the last wrestling show attended, Lucha Va Voom 2 played before a sold out audience of over 1300 people at the Mayan Theater in downtown Los Angeles. Combining the best of old fashioned burlesque in between the last paced lucha-libre (Mexican style of wrestling), featuring midweights, women wrestlers, and Mexican Wrestling Superstars Blue Demon Jr. and La Parka, the show had something for everyone as the Performers literally TORE the house down, stripping and crippling. For info on the next show go online to [luchavavoom.com](http://luchavavoom.com).

Strange goings on at the New Beverly Theater every month as Yours Truly and Johnny Legend present Incredibly Strange Film Festivals, kicking off with the amazing double bill of Herschell Gordon Lewis' 2000 Maniacs and the Italian gore classic Dr. Butcher MD, along with a special classic

horror movie trailer show. The theater was packed with gorehounds all out for blood. Call 323-938-4035 for program updates.

The 1st hopefully annual LA Shakedown took place on Sat/Sun Feb 15 & 16 at the Grand Theater



Incredibly Strange Wrestling

in downtown LA featuring over 50 bands performing on 3 stages. There were vendors dealing in CDs, records, shirts, posters, and many other music related memorabilia. The show went on each day from 12 pm to 2 am. My booth was right behind stage one and I saw 22 bands over a 2 day period. Highlight bands included a reunion show of DM2 and the Lyres from the East Coast. These legendary bands featured the same lead singer and he has kept the band together in one form or another since 1975. A band to keep your eyes on are The Slumlord who put on an extremely tight 30 minute set and had the audience jumping up and down in mid-afternoon. Last but not least, we attended the yearly American Film Market held at the Santa Monica Loews Hotel. Most of the

independent studios rented suites to promote their product to International Film buyers. Over 500 screenings were conducted, at most of the Santa Monica theatres. Horror films of particular note were 3 films being distributed by Lions Gate, Rob Zombie's directing debut, *House of 1,000 Corpses*, which featured outstanding acting by exploitation film icon Sid Haig, Bill Mosely, Karen Black, and a most memorable debut by Sheri Moon. Great sets, atmosphere and visuals make this a must see when it opens in April. *Cabin Fever* is another standout with a timely subject matter of a group of teenage campers infected with the flesh eating disease with no known cure and which is highly contagious.

The highlight of the show was being thrown out of the Toho suite after trying to get a pass to see the new *Godzilla* film, and even having a *Godzilla* brochure I took pulled out of my hands. Thanks for nothing guys.

All in all, it's been a busy time of year, and as usual, I'll see you at the movies and the Wrestling Shows.

Eric Caidin - Hollywood, California

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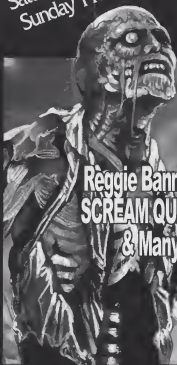
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